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ISSUE 60

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Clayton Murwin

SELF PUBLISHER MAGAZINE

As we are putting this issue together, the USA is embroiled in pre-election… well, angst. The two major parties are thrashing about, attempting to secure victory for their view of what the world needs right now. We're not going to get into all that. By the time you read this, the outcome will be known, the direction of things set, and onward we'll all go. So, we thought it would be nice to take the opportunity to shine some light on a more lasting, patriotic, creative effort. Clayton Murwin's Heroes Fallen Studios is something I personally have known about since he first began, many years ago. His dedication, perseverance, and vision of what he is trying to accomplish are admirable. So, while the rest of the country is coming down off the election buzz, and the rest of the world is returning to focusing on things that matter at home, we present this month's cover feature on something that does truly matter.

You may notice, as you go through the issue, that things are looking a bit different—and better. That is because, this month, we welcome on board Jay Savage in the Art Director role. He is taking over page layout and design which, I think we can all agree is a good thing. I never claimed to be much in this department, and "serviceable" is about the level of my own designs. Jay is much more accomplished in this area and, as I've talked with him and about him—he has been as much a part of the reason that SP! is rolling along as anyone. Having him even more involved is a blessing.

Looking forward, Jay is also going to be involved in making SP! available in print form, and he and I are doing some further discussion and planning to further restore the SPA to life, get our anthology running, and maybe next year sometime... look at bringing Small Press Idol back. So, we have a lot of fun in the works, as we keep pumping out these issues. I'm going to keep this editorial short and, hopefully, that will allow Jay some space to say "Hi," as well. See everyone next issue!

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CLAYTON MURWIN

WARNING: Heroes Fallen Studios' website and comics sometimes contain graphic accounts of experiences concerning combat. These can potentially act as triggers for someone suffering from a trauma-based disorder, such as PTSD.

Heroes Fallen Studios Inc. was created by Clayton Murwin to "provide comfort, guidance, support and assistance to the heroes and members of our military and their families, both in time of war and in peace". It is a not-for-profit organisation that creates graphic novels based on the experiences of military personnel, and "Fallen Heroes Portraits" for the families of those military personnel who were killed in action.'

Untold Stories from Iraq & Afghanistan, Volume I, and the upcoming Volume II (scheduled for release around Dec 2012/Jan 2013),features stories recounting the personal experiences of military personnel. Heroes Fallen Studios Inc. receives stories from veterans and those currently serving in the armed forces about present and past conflicts. The person whose story is being told has a say in every stage of the process that turns their words into a comic book (and they are in contact with the whole creative team).

A wide range of stories are included, on topics ranging from stories about PTSD and harrowing accounts of battle, to more humorous tales, like "Shoo" (a story about armor-plated flies, which will feature in USFIA-II).

Fallen Heroes Portraits are 11x17 pencil portraits, all done by Clayton Murwin at the request of the family or friends of people who were killed in action. There is no charge for this service; all they need to do is contact Fallen Heroes Studios (heroesfallenstudios@gmail.com. Additional contact information is on their website) and provide photographs.

Heroes Fallen Studios Inc. accepts donations of time, money, and exposure to support this venture (printing costs, marketing, promotional travel, and shipping costs). They have a sponsorship system in place (for individual, foundations, corporate and cause marketing), they also, gratefully accept donations – from individuals wanting to make a on-off contribution and those who organise fund-raising events. As well as selling their graphic novels and t-shirts. They also encourage people to spread the word: to people with stories to tell, families who would like a Fallen Heroes Portrait and to anyone who might like to read the graphic novels.

Clayton Murwin tells us more about the Heroes Fallen Studios Inc.:

SP!: What types of stories do you publish?

CM: We publish actual accounts that our men and women lived through while serving. Sometimes their stories are funny, combat-related, or about loss. In Volume II, we will be including stories from Gold Star parents whose loved one died while serving. But all of the stories we produce in our books are real untold stories.

SP!: How did you get started doing the Portraits?

CM: I started doing the portraits for a few reasons. God blessed me with the ability to draw, and I feel so much sadness for the families that have lost their heroes to war. So I started posting on various sites, such as our website and FB, that if any family member would like a free pencilled portrait, they could contact me. And I was immediately flooded with requests. There is absolutely no cost to the family to receive a portrait from me. This is very personal for me to repay a debt which can never be repaid.

SP!: Do you work with or put families in touch with other organisations (e.g. counsellors, charities)?

CM: We do put soldiers and families in contact with other organizations that may need counselling, as we do not have any counsellors directly associated with Heroes Fallen Studios. We do, however, have a page on our website dedicated to Give an Hour, which supplies such counselling free of charge. We also have a large database of other charities and organizations that we suggest and endorse. Our main focus is allowing the veterans to talk about their service, and help them understand that they don't have to keep it all bottled up inside, which can help and can be therapeutic for those struggling with some PTSD issues. We also connect the veteran whose story we are telling with the creators directly. We do this for two reasons. One is to involve him/her in the creative process and allow for complete accuracy. Two is that we are trying to help educate the general population as to what our men and women go through in a wartime setting. We are trying to bridge the gap between civilian and military cultures. We have been contacted by DARPA (the Department of Army Research and Development). They were very interested in how we were able to get veterans to talk about their stories. And they are also using our graphic novel as one of the bases for developing a new online software technology, which will allow veterans to create their own stories, not for

publication, in a comic format to assist in the healing process of PTSD.

SP!: How did you get from portraits to a comic (did you seek contributors out, or did they contact you after hearing about the portraits)?

CM: Actually, the comics came first. That was my vision from the beginning, when I founded the organization. I have a deep respect for our veterans and I love comics, so it was only natural for me to combine the two things that I love the most. The portraits came because I saw so much hurt in the families that had lost their heroes. Again, it is for very personal reasons that I do this.

SP!: You are looking for contributors for the comic. Do you ever think about recruiting other portrait artists?

CM: No, as I said it is for very personal reasons that I do this.

SP!: You accept donations and sponsorships. Have companies approached you about helping, or does it tend to be individuals?

CM: Yes, we have been approached by companies. Mostly, our contributions come from individuals. We have, however, just landed a contract with the Department of Defence Korean War Commemoration Committee KW60, to produce two 50-page graphic novels about the Korean War, honoring the service and sacrifice of those who served. Those will be coming out in 2013, for the 60th anniversary of the war.

SP!: The T-shirt designs in your web shop appear to have a very different tone from the books and portraits. Was that a conscious decision?

CM: Yes, I certainly wasn't unconscious when I made the decision. Sorry, just a little humor there.

SP!: Do you get stories from a range of military personnel, for example infantry, officers, medical, navy, army, air force, pilots, communications and technical, and engineering? Or is there a particular group from which most of the stories come—who feel their stories wouldn't be heard otherwise?

CM: Yes we do, but the majority of the stories seem to come from army and infantry.

SP!: Do you have a lot of interest from bricks-and mortar comic shops, or do you mostly sell online?

CM: We have had a few shops carry the books, but most sales come from our online activity and conventions. The VA Comicon allows us to set up at their events at no cost. As do a few others, by offering us a free table—like Wizard World Chicago, Pittsburgh Comicon, and HeroesCon.

SP!: Is it difficult to strike a balance between the realities of war and the creation of a comic that is suitable for a wide age range?

CM: Not really. We do not tend to show a lot of blood and gore situations in the books, and we try to keep the language as clean as possible. However we are telling real stories from veterans that have served in war. We also have to make sure that we are conscious about triggers in the books. Triggers are things that might cause a veteran suffering from PTSD, TBI, and such to have a flash back.

SP!: Apart from classified/official secrets material, is there any type of story you don't take?

CM: We tend to shy away from stories regarding internal military issues. If I have a concern or a question about a particular story, I will run it by my veteran correspondence officer and ask his advice on whether or not to move forward on it. To date, I have had two stories which I felt were not suitable for our books.

SP!: How did the Climb for Heroes go?

CM: It went well, but not as successfully as Valerie would have liked it to. The Climb for Heroes is not one of our projects. That is solely handled by Valerie Finnigan, who is one of our writers and a very big supporter of what we do. She took on that task to raise money to show her support and respect for what we do.

SP!: Eagle Rare Life Contest for $30,000 prize Please vote for Us! Ongoing or finished?

CM: How's it going? Is it good publicity even if we don't win? It is still ongoing. We don't seem to be doing as well as I had hoped, but that being said, it does give us more exposure.

SP!: Any upcoming events?

CM: We will be attending a one-day show in Wilson, NC. At the end of October, and also in November we will be at the VA Comicon in Richmond, VA. That will be the last show we do this year.

SP!: The Journal of Military Experience—how do they differ from you, and do you plan to work with them again in the future?

CM: The Journal of Military Experience is the brainchild of Travis Martin, who is a veteran and who also suffers from PTSD. His books concentrate more on the storytelling side of things, using prose and poetry. Untold Stories from Iraq & Afghanistan uses the more visual comic format to tell our stories. I volunteered my artistic talents to produce one-page illustrations for 18 stories in JME II. We have decided to combine our efforts on JME III and USFIA II, and produce a double-sided flip book. Look for that around Veterans Day 2013.

SP!: Gold Star?

The term Gold Star is a term given to mothers and fathers who have lost a son or daughter in combat while serving. It is a form of respect shown and given for their loss.

Thank you for taking the time to interview us. Please spread the word about who we are and what we do here at Heroes Fallen Studios Inc.org

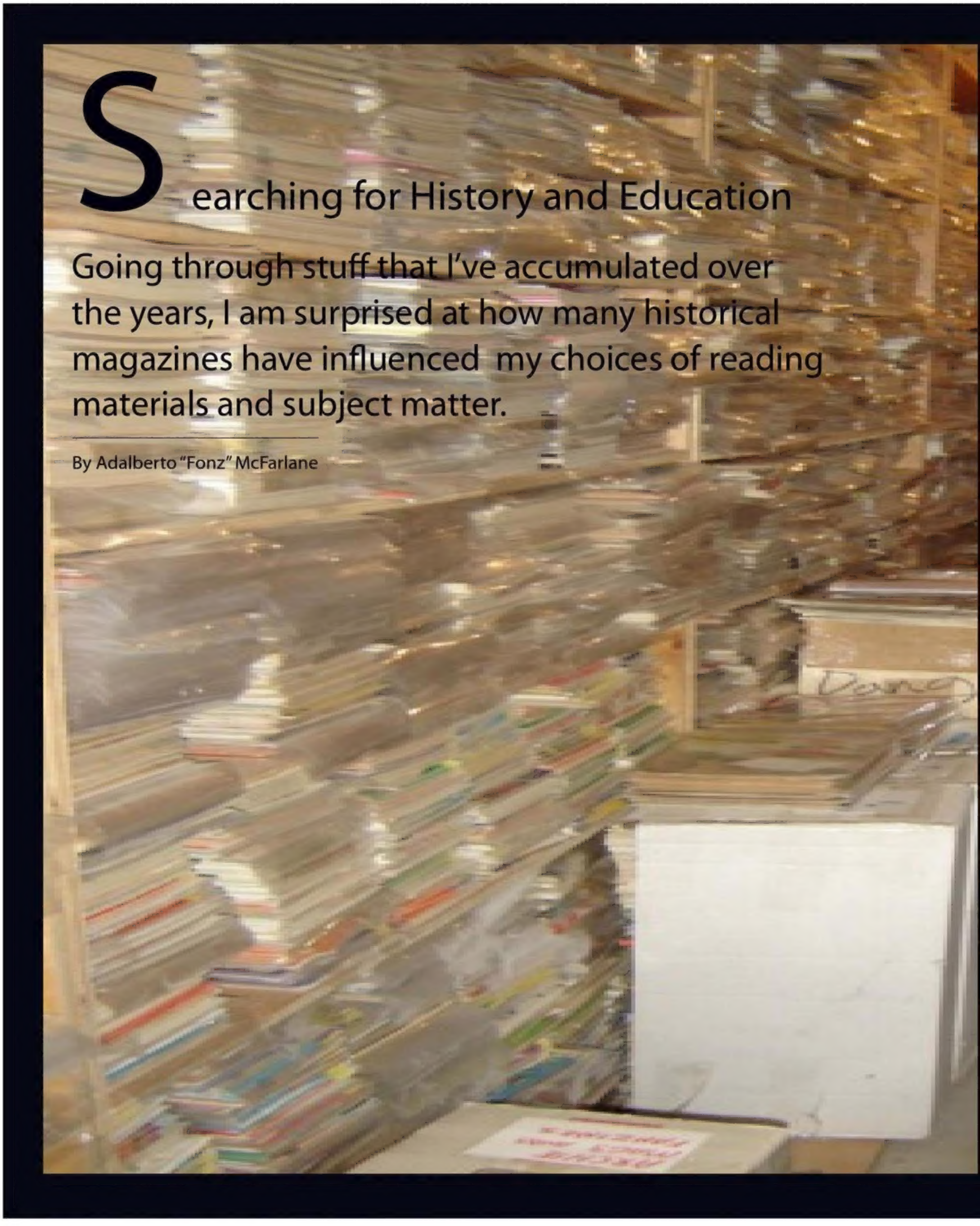
Heroes Fallen Studios Inc.org is looking for: pencillers, inkers, colorists, letterers, writers (to help rewrite and restructure raw journal entries and stories into comic book form), editors, and marketing specialists to assist with their graphic novel series. There are details on their website (http://www.heroes-fallenstudiosinc.org/getinvolved.htm).

Web links:
http://www.heroesfallenstudiosinc.org/
http://www.facebook.com/theheromaker
http://www.eaglerarelife.com/node/400 It appears that anyone may vote (not just US residents) and you may vote daily.
http://militaryexperience.org/

Searching for History and Education

Going through stuff that I've accumulated over the years, I am surprised at how many historical magazines have influenced my choices of reading materials and subject matter.

By Adalberto "Fonz" McFarlane



I'VE BEEN A comic book fan, reader, and collector since 1977, and even back then, there weren't that many magazines covering the industry. Oh sure, there were fanzine publications, but I never knew about them. I remember reading Comics Scene and Marvel had a magazine about their company and comics, simply called Marvel Age. Then there was The Comics Journal. This magazine was more critical and seemed to be presenting information in a more journalistic fashion. It is still in publication, as a huge, 300-page, once-or-twice-a-year tome (it takes me about a few months to finish it). You can get a three-issue subscription for $75 at http://www.fantagraphics.com, and read articles and pick up back issues at http://www.tcj.com, too.

IF YOU ENJOYED Dave Sim and Gehard's Cerebus comics, and want to see updates on the creators or anything else related to Cerebus, then pick up Following Cerebus (it's up to issue 12 now) from Win-Mill Productions at http://www.followingcerebus.com. There is also the old zine, The Rocket's Blast and The Comicollector by James Van Hise. I have found a "new first issue" that was published in May 2000. I do not know if Mr. Van Hise is still publishing this tome, but inquiries can be sent to jimvanhise@aol.com.Now, for all of you who enjoy the classic art from the pulp days and artists such as Norman Saunders, you definitely need to get a subscription ($60 for four issues; each issue is only $15! Tell your local comic shop to order it if they can!) to Illustration magazine from The Illustrated Press (http://www.illustration-magazine.com and http://www.theillustratedpress.com) . I find it to be a wonderful magazine that presents the classic artists in a great light. To find books on artists, sketchbooks, statues, etc. check out Bud Plant Art Books (http://www.budsartbooks.com). Bud doesn't have a physical catalog anymore—it's all on the website. Enjoy! Top Shelf Comix had taken over publishing the Twomorrows series Comic Book Artist, and published six issues which you can purchase at http://www.topshelfcomix.com/catalog/comic-book-artist. It looks like editor Jon B. Cooke and Twomorrows are coming out with a new series called (I think!) Comic Book Masters, slated for 2013. Check the Twomorrows website for info. Well, that does it for the history section; now, on to education!Education is getting more and more expensive, right? As an artist or an aspiring one, getting that formal training is breaking wallets left and right. Luckily, there are alternatives to the four-year college route. Here they are:Art Instruction School They have a Fundamentals in Art correspondence course and have been around since about 1914. How many of you remember seeing the Norman Rockwell ads on the backs of comics? The entire course costs approximately $5,000, with the deposit and monthly payments at $150. Its great for beginners. http://www.artinstructionschools.eduThe Kubert School If you live in Dover, NJ, you can attend this school that has graduated comics professionals, such as Bart Sears, the Kubert brothers, and many others. They even have correspondence courses that cost $325 plus shipping. http://If you live in Dover, NJ, you can attend this school that has graduated comics professionals, such as Bart Sears, the Kubert brothers, and many others. They even have correspondence courses that cost $325 plus shipping. http://www.kubertschool.edu

Penn Foster College They have a Graphic Design correspondence course (four semesters) a a reasonable cost, for either certification or an associates degree; its up to you. Check them out at http://www.pennfoster.eduStratford Career Institute This is also a correspondence school. They have a course in art; check it out at http://www.scitraining.com/art. They also offer a desktop publishing course at http://www.scitraining/desktop_publishing_and_design. When you finish, you get a diploma. It's similar to Penn Foster, in that it has a reasonable cost and monthly payments. You can send in your exams via the website, too!If none of these work for you, you can go to a four-year college and have a big student loan to pay off in about ten years. I'm just teasing a bit, but do your research on which option(s) are best for your education.

Any questions or comments, please feel free to email me at publish@ninenappy.com and I'll respond. Until next issue!

Adalberto "Fonz" McFarlane is the founder of NINE Nappy Publishing (a division of NINE Nappy Productions), and the creator and illustrator of the action/adventure comic book series Michael R. Sloane: Walking Through the Belly of the Beast. A resident of Sacramento, CA, he plans on attending more comic book conventions this year. You can see more of his work at http://www.ninenappy.com , and at http://www.blackplanet.com/NINENappy_Publishing Please visit the Michael R. Sloane Facebook page at http://www.facebook.com/pages/Michael-R-Sloane/278847188814627

Revelations

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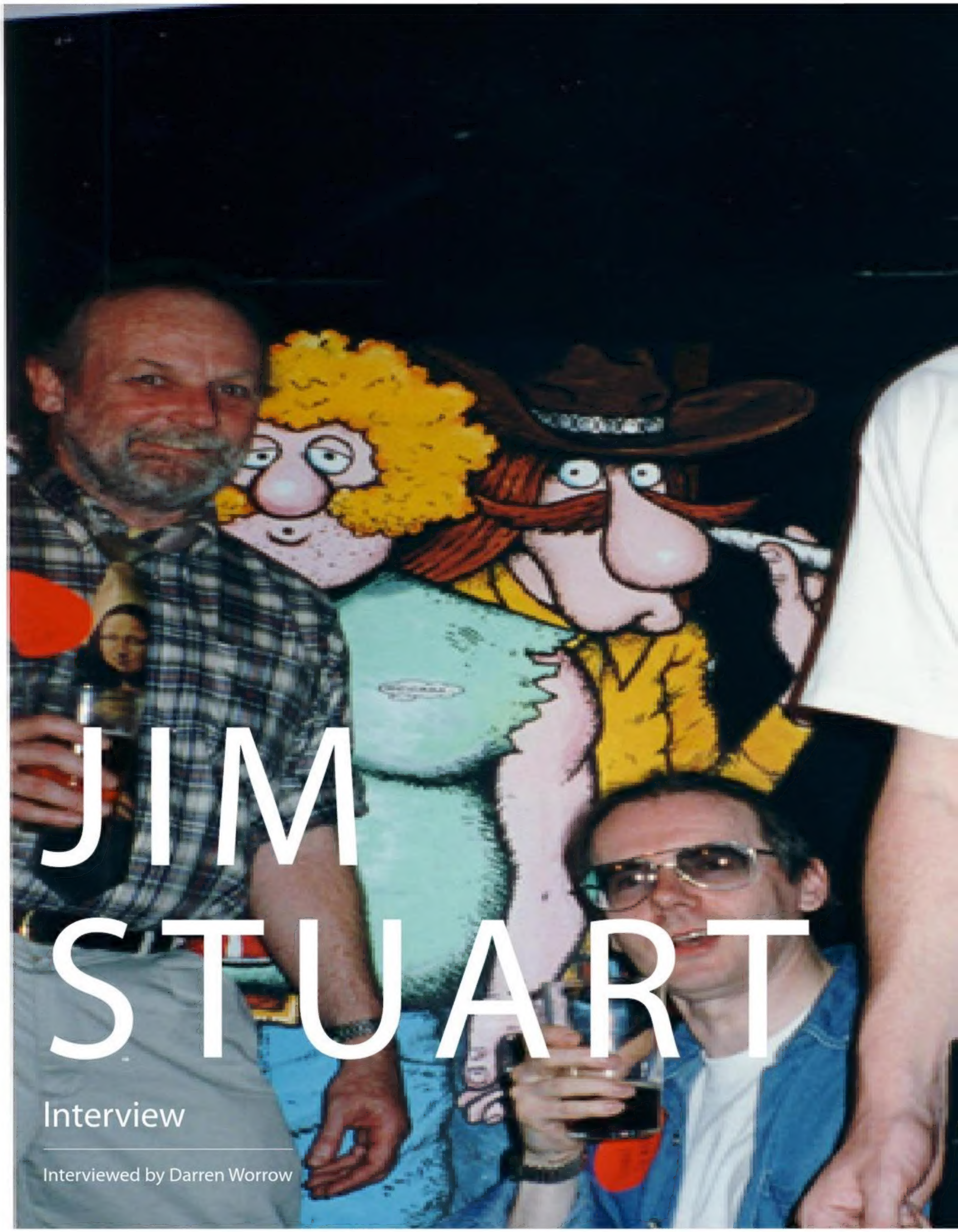
Based on the hit underground comic book. Brand new hip-hop cartoon web series.
Starring Chappelle Show & Patrice O' Neal alums, Wil Sylvince & Dante Nero. With original music by DJ Wally Pish Posh (Alicia Keys, Luscious Jackson)
Created, written & animated by Leesa Dean
chilltowntv.com



JIM STUART

Interview

Interviewed by Darren Worrow

ABOVE
Jim Stuart
and friends

GANJAMAN AND HIS Trusty Sidekick Jim Stewart!

By Darren Wenraw

When I was out there producing my own small press "alternative" comic, I never warmed to the term "stoner," although that was the genre it was often cast into. I noticed around that time (the late 1990s), that there seemed to be a lack of this subject matter which had ruled the underground comics of yore. Just when I thought I was on my own, I picked up the blatantly-titled Northern Lightz, an ambitious number; glossy A4, full color cover. I felt I'd been outdone! It was published by a pack of Scottish cartoonists and dared to venture where most titles og the time never would. Exploring the many faces of weed-smoking through parody and character assassinations, no other story stuck out quite as naughtily as the superhero made from a cannabis leaf, "Ganjaman"!TMoving on some years to today, Northern Lightz has long ago ceased to exist, but Ganjaman is still flying high—in more ways than one. He is the star feature of his own anthology, Ganjaman Presents…, which is, to me, a darn good reason to catch up with both him and his creator, Jim Stewart.

The first Northern Lightz was back in 1999, but I understand you had self-published many small press Ganjaman comics prior to this, so just how old is the weed superhero and can you give us some background on your beginnings?

Hi Darren and readers! I first thought of Ganjaman around 1994. I was married with a baby and in full time work as an illustrator on gravestones. So I drew in-between changing nappies and sandblasting drawings onto stone! I saved a few quid up and published The Astounding Ganjaman #1 in 1995—a 22-page story of his origin, plus my tribute to The Freak Brothers, called "Nobody's heroes," starring Tam, Dick and Harry. I did five of them, plus the American-sized one called Tar Wars, which was co-written by Alan Grant. They each took about a year to draw, due to family and work commitments. I would have done more, but I had to eat, sleep and s*@t sometime!

When we met once at a comic con and noticed Gilbert

Shelton, we joined forces and made a beeline to meet him, so I know he is one of our shared influences. Who else would you name-check as influences on your work?

Yeah, I remember that. I'd met Gilbert a few times and he's probably my biggest influence. The Cheech and Chong films are, in a way, too. My other comic influences are Kirby, Ditko, Kane, Byrne, and a few of the MAD artists. I read comics or looked at the pictures from a very young age, and Spider-Man was always my favorite character. I liked TinTin too; the art was always perfect. I spent a lot of my childhood engrossed in drawing and reading. I hated sports!

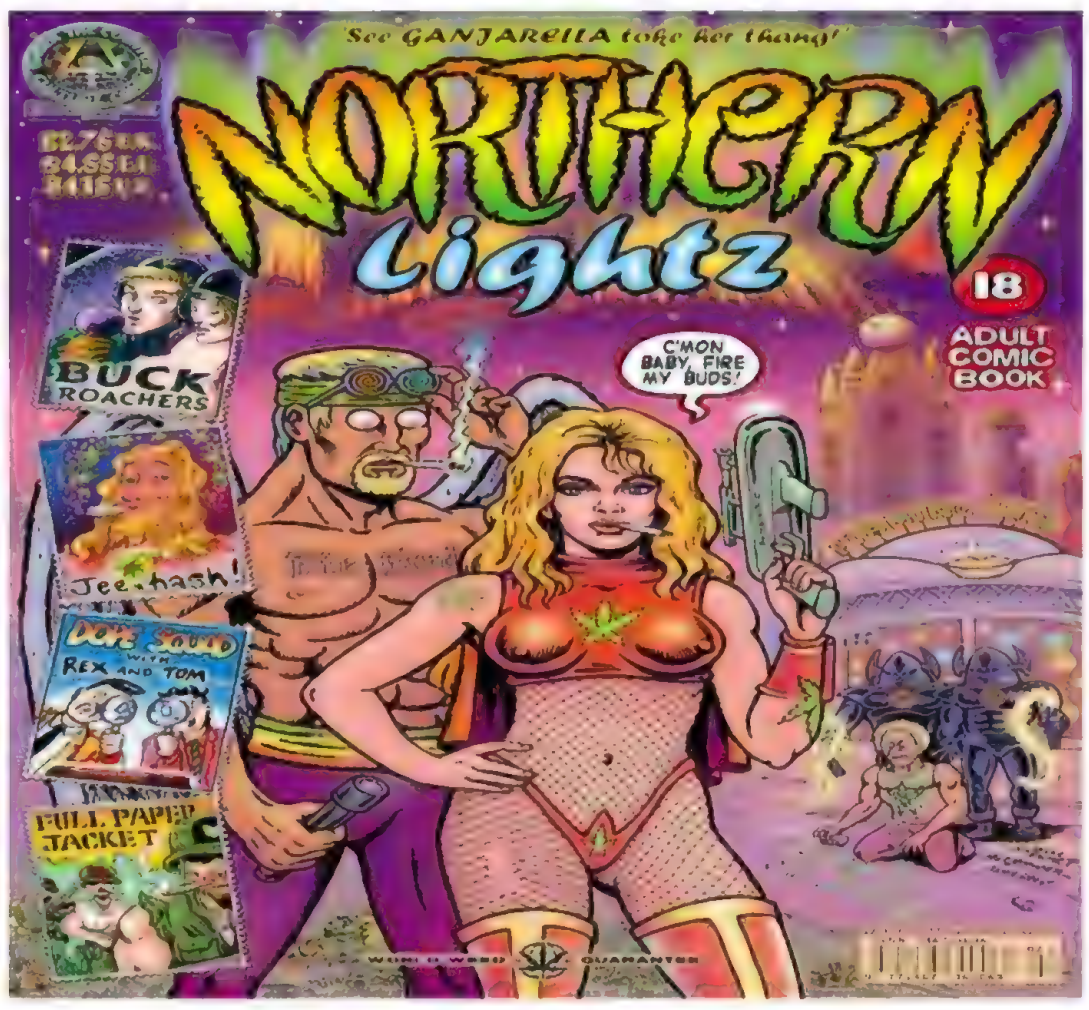
Yeah, I see ol' Spidey in Ganjaman. So, how did Northern Lightz come about then?

I sent a letter to Jim'll Fix It (only kidding!). One day, I was in a comic shop owned by Pete Root (RIP), and he told me I should take my comics to a cartoonists club called SCCAM (Scottish Cartoonists and Comic Artists Members) It was held in a dingy and smoky basement, on the first Wednesday of every month, in a pub called Blackfriars. He mentioned that Will Eisner was guest of honor that month, but I was working fulltime and couldn't make that one. I went to the next one, though, and it was packed with cartoonists and writers. Grant Morrison and Mark Millar were there, but they hadn't quite hit the big time, yet. I met Dave Alexander, who had done "Electric Soup," and I showed him Issue 1 of The Astounding Ganjaman. He liked it, so we talked about doing a dope anthology, which would be called Skunk. We asked if anyone wanted to contribute, but there was a cost of £25 for each page. Jamie Grant and the late Pudsy Morris came aboard and, after a brainstorm at Dave's house, we decided to call it Northern Lightz. We got 5,000 copies done of Issue 1, and when they arrived, Dave wasn't happy with the color on the cover, so we sent it back for a reprint. Alan Grant came aboard by Issue 3 and started to write about half the comic.

Give us the low down, if you will, about . What can we expect to see in its future?

> Doesn't bother me in the slightest, the fat cats will still get fatter. Poverty is still rife in Scotland. Deep fried haggis and Mars bars are cheap, though!

When I left NLZ due to difference of opinions, the title was changed to Wasted and the dope content was dropped. At this time, Soft Secrets was publishing Ganjaman newspaper-sized strips and translating them into eight different languages, so at least, I was getting paid for my work. Then, in 2008, I published Ganjaman Presents #1, with Dave and Pudsy supplying their art. I asked Gilbert Shelton and Bryan Talbot if they would too, and they said yeah. I raised the dough and went for 2,000 copies. I'd like to call it "a balls-out" comic, because it's a bit more political than NLZ was, so you can expect



some thought- provoking issues in the future. Plus, I like finding new underground talents out there, so who knows who will pop up? Oh yeah, Dennis Kitchen has given me five pages for Issue 3 and Hunt Emerson gave me six pages; it is ready for print, but trying to raise the cash to do it isn't as easy as it once was.

Let's say, by some bizarre miracle, that the government did decide to legalize cannabis. Do you fear Ganjaman might lose appeal, on the grounds that smoking weed would not be considered so outrageous? Rhetorical question, really—sorry. Do you ever see legalization as a reality?!

I would hope it is legalized one day, and on that day, I would happily give up drawing the leafy one. I draw a few other characters as well, so maybe it would be a good thing. And, since I love the weed, I wouldn't have to break the law every time I score.

Given its medical properties, as well as its many other uses, such as biofuel, paper, and cloth manufacture, hemp will always be shrouded by its legality . Could—or does—Ganjaman use his superpowers to promote this notion?

Yeah I read up on all that stuff, so I know it's unjust that they hold this beneficial plant back from society. Tommy Chong had prostate cancer not so long ago, and cured it with cannabis oil. There's more evidence up online of others self-medicating, with miracle results. I could give you a big rant, but I'll save it for the comics.

While we are on that political route, I'd like to ask how you feel about the recent voting proposals for an independent Scotland (for those outside the UK, Scotland wants the chance to vote against being part of Britain; while they stole our recipe for haggis, we stole all their inventors, scientists and authors for many centuries. Only fair, then!).

Doesn't bother me in the slightest, the fat cats will still get fatter. Poverty is still rife in Scotland. Deep fried haggis and Mars bars are cheap, though!

It is also only fair to point out that most of the great British comic institutions, such as DC Thompson, are, in fact, Scottish—which gives the country a wealth of comic culture, so much so that, when I was a child growing up in the south of England, Beano artists like Ken Reid convinced me that haggis was a real creature with a little pig-like snout! What comics did you read as a kid (sorry, wee bairn!), Jim, and were you aware of the impact that DC Thompson had on us southern nancies?!

I was never a big fan of DC Thompson comics. I read somewhere that they didn't hire Catholics. I much preferred the American comic market. I did like the odd Commando comic, mind you. I read the Marvel comic reprints (Spider-Man Weekly, The Titans, Captain Britain, and Hulk Weekly) as a kid, and I liked the horror comics, too. I would get the odd Beano or Dandy annual at Xmas, so I did get to see Reid, Baxendale, and the other great cartoonists who adorned their pages. I can see why they inspired a generation of cartoonists.

Back to Ganjaman Presents, then—you certainly seem to have some great contributions lined up from Gilbert Shelton, Alan Grant and Bryan Talbot (it reads like the comic equivalent of The Travelling Wilburys!). Are there any others you'd like to mention, who are up and coming talents?

I really dig Canadian comic artist Gibson Quarter. He did the cover for Issue 3 and also pencilled the story, which is written and lettered by Dave Alexander (him again), and inked and coloured by me. Bob Byrne is another great artist whose work I really like to publish.

Thanks for your time, Jim, and we wish you all the best with Ganjaman for the future. Can you just let our readers know where they can obtain this crazy comic?

Stuart Gould of UKComics has put Issues 1-2 in his new catalog, so shops can order from him at http://www.freewebs.com/ganjaman65/page1.htm, plus they can Paypal me direct. I give a free sketch of choice with every purchase. My email is jimstewart65@googlemail.com. I can be reached here for any contribution or advert, as well.

Interviewed by Darren Worrow , www.darrenworrow.webs.com

LEFT -The Freak Brothers.

CENTER -Cover-ganjarella .

RIGHT -Cover-Ganjaman.

PICTURE SMASH

PUTTING PICTURES IN YOUR SMASHWORDS EBOOK.

A step by step how to.

Smashwords™

your ebook. your way.

THE FIRST THING to remember when building a document to submit to Smashwords is that they have a file size limit of 5MB. And that's it. If you're doing a comic, a large children's book, or anything else that may depend on illustrations, this can be a very real problem.The Smashwords Style Guide includes instructions for using MS Word's Compress feature to reduce larger files without impact to quality. "If your file is greater than 5MB, users of Word 2003 and later can use Word's awesome Compress feature, which will dramatically reduce the file size without visibly harming quality. Simply right-mouse click on an image, click Format Picture, and then click the Compress button. Next, click the All pictures in document radio button, then click Web/Screen (selects the 96dpi compression), then click OK." But even before I came to Smashwords as one of the formatters on their little list, I had discovered the following:

1. Compress does work, but it doesn't compress as much as you sometimes think it should.

2. Compress can ruin the quality of your images—and it won't show until after it's been run through the Meatgrinder or you print it on paper.

3. Setting your pictures to grayscale in the same dialogue box can often INCREASE the size of your document.

So what do you do when you have a document for Smashwords that's refusing to lose weight without sacrificing quality? In this article, I'm going to address how I handle images for a Smashwords document, step for step.

STEP 0: HAVE A GOOD IMAGE EDITING PROGRAM.

Microsoft Paint won't cut it, by the way. Smashwords suggests Paint (http://www.getpaint.net/) or Picasa (http://picasa.google.com), because they're both affordable (read: free). Although I hear it's no longer being developed, I also suggest Gimp (http://www.gimp.org/), which is also free. I personally prefer Paintshop Pro, which I've been using since before Photoshop was emperor. (And, if you want to spend money on it, it runs an average of $50 to $80, depending on where you find it.)

If you do use an open domain (free) image editing program, I highly encourage you to drop a small donation of $5 or so to the developers (if they take them), as a thank you for the blood, sweat and tears they donated so that you can sweat some blood and tears of your own.

STEP 1: CHECK YOUR IMAGE SIZES

Okay you've got your editing software and you've… this is very important… opened it. Good. Now, the next step is to go back to your folder containing your images and look at the image sizes. You can do this in various ways. The quickest is to right-click on each one and check properties. I personally like to keep my folder settings on detail; all I have to do then is read the folder.

If all of your images are high quality, full color beauties, and your Word document size is still under the limit, great! Skip to step 4. If this isn't the case, then you have some work to do. I start with the largest file-sized images and work my way down one by one, checking the Word document as I go. The less I have to edit and compress, the cheaper the formatting cost for you.

STEP 2: RESIZE

This next part is common sense, right? Of course it is. Open the largest image in your software and resize it to the following dimensions:

- 5" width maximum— keep aspect ratio turned on
- 6.90" height maximum— keep aspect ratio turned on
- 72 to 100 dpi

It's important to note here that, even when your document is under the size limit, if your images are above this height, you're likely to run into problems with images bleeding off of the reader screen. Not to mention a potential autovetter error. So, make sure your images are all correct!

If you don't understand what that means, I'm afraid I won't be able to help you much. What I can tell you is the following:

I open my document in Paintshop Pro. At the top of my menu bar, I click the tab that reads "Image" and go down to "Image Resize" to open a dialogue window. I make sure the setting "lock aspect ratio" is checked.

I make sure my resolution setting is no less than 72 dpi. Usually, I pick 100 dpi. If I were formatting a color epub strictly for Nook Color or Kindle Fire, I'd pick 150 dpi and go to around 6 x 9. (Although I don't recommend you go too high! I have found out, by trial and error, that large-resolution pictures shrunk down to tiny screen sizes can lose quality and be a little hard to read.)

I select the width first. If the image is less than 5" wide, but over 6.9" long, I will reduce the height and ignore the width. Otherwise, I tell the program to reduce the image to 5" wide. Some programs will then predict how tall the image is going to be under that setting. If so, check it! If compressing an image to 5" wide doesn't bring its length below 6.9", I have to tell the program to change the length to 6.9" instead.

IMPORTANT: Setting an image to 7" long can actually trick an ereader into thinking that the picture takes up two pages. That can cause problems in the document.

I set my compression level. In Paintshop, I do that when I hit "save as" to open the save dialogue window. I click a little button labeled "options" to open that dialogue and slide my compression level anywhere from 10 to 20. The lower the compression, the smaller the image, BUT the more image quality gets lost, so don't go beyond 20! I try to keep my compression as close to 1 as possible, but there are often times when I can't do that.

If my image is in color, I try keeping it that way to start.

I always save my image under a different name. I NEVER save over my originals! I may have to revisit them to try compression again. Never compress the image you've already compressed, or you're likely to end up with a very ugly mess.

Images can be saved as JPeG or PNG files. Smashwords states that PNG seems to have better results. If my image has words on it, I might save it as a tif with layers turned on, or as a PSD, because of the following step. The final image that goes into the document needs to be a JPeG or PNG.

CONTINUED

IF YOUR IMAGE is a comic or just something simple that reads, "Feel good about yourself," the next important thing to ask is if it's going to be readable on a tiny screen. They're making ereaders bigger and bigger these days, which makes me think that at this stage, we should just go back to reading giant tomes written by monks. Despite that, many people read ebooks on a small screen, such as—gasp!—their smart phone. To make your document universal, you have to keep those tiny screen sizes in mind.As a test, tell your image editor to view the image at a small size, such as 20 percent. When you get your image looking about 3 to 4" wide on your screen, see if you can read it. If you can't, chances are it won't be readable on an ereader. You're going to have to fix that.

I can't tell you how to do text without writing an entirely new article. If you're someone who has put the text on your images, you're hopefully someone who already has a glimmer of how to fix it. My advice: make the font a big bigger. Try a different font; some fonts are easy to read at one size and just impossible at another. Increase your kerning; spacing out your letters can also help. Save your image according to the instructions in step 2.

STEP 4: REINSERT INTO WORD

Go to your Smashwords document, find the image in question or the place where you'd like it to be, and insert your new image. The Smashwords Style Guide, cautions against using floating images (if you can click on the image and drag it, it's floating), because your image may appear in unpredictable places after the conversion. To anchor a floating image, right mouse-click on it, then click Format Picture, then Layout, then In Line With Text, then save. Finally click Word's center button.

If you remember the old HTML web pages from the early 90s with divider bar pictures between paragraphs, that's the style we're going for. It's crude, but it works. And it can be very pretty, if done well.

If you tell Word to resize your image, that's not going to work. That autovetter is a cold, uncaring program and won't pay attention. So when you insert, you want the image at 100 percent, so you know for sure what you're working with.

STEP 5: CHECK YOUR WORD DOCUMENT SIZE

OSave your Word document. Go to the folder in which it's contained and check its size. Are you below the limit already? Congratulations! Move to Step 6. You're not below the limit? Alas, it's time for you to pick the next biggest image in the folder, go back to step 2 and go through the process all over again.

If you've done the process to all of your images and your document is still above the limit, check to see how far above the limit it is. If it's VERY far above, this next step may not work, and you'll have to decide if you need all of your images, or if there's a way to break up your book into sequels without breaking Smashword's guidelines. If it's not that far above, then the next step is to turn your images grayscale.

STEP 6 : GRAYSCALE

I don't recommend going grayscale for the following reasons:

1. Color looks better on my black-and-white Nook screen, as well as on my husband's BeBook, my first gen Kindle, and, of course, my color Nextbook2. It stands to reason that it will look better on other such screens.
2. Furthermore, a lot of the newer readers have gone to color.
3. I was fighting to keep things in color before that happened, as a matter of fact—because some people have turned their notebook laptops into large ereaders (I know I did), and those are in color.
4. Some people read while sitting at their desk.
5. Not to mention that smart phones have also gone to color.
6. There are many more reasons to try to stick to color.

If you do have to make the grayscale choice, I recommend you pick and choose various images that might already look grayscale, but are compressed in color first. Then decide if all of your images have to be grayscale or if you can get away stylistically with just a few. Reopen your compressed image in your image editor and tell the editor to make it a grayscale document. In Paintshop, I do this by clicking the Image tab and selecting grayscale from my dropdown menu.

Note: Desaturate does not do exactly the same thing. If you're tempted to use this command to get a grayscale image, note that your image will still retain a lot of information that using Grayscale won't keep. Grayscale produces a smaller-sized image. Now save. When you save, your editor may tell you that it has to save the image with so many bytes of color. That's okay. Hit yes, and move on.

Now go back to step 3. Do this until you have a document that's the size you want it. When that happens, you're either ready for me to format the rest… or you're ready for uploading to Smashwords, if you have the rest done yourself.

STEP 7 – A TIP FOR WHEN YOU UPLOAD TO SMASHWORDS:

From the Smashwords Style Guide: "If the images are critical to your book, then when you publish your book, uncheck the checkbox eBook option for "Plain Text" because photos and charts don't translate into plain text. If the images are a nice-to-have but not a need-to-have, then go ahead and allow the Plain Text option." If you don't know what that means, you'll find out.

It should also be noted that the PalmDoc format is really another format for plain text. I've yet to put a file through Smashwords and have the PalmDoc feature keep the illustrations within. But if that works for you, you have my envy and my blessing.

FINAL NOTE: And after reading all that, a quick way to get your images the size you need is to resize them in Word, save your file as a filtered html document, and then edit your document in an html editor before reopening in Word. However, this doesn't guarantee that your images are going to look good. They will always be knocked down to 72 dpi and can sometimes come out a little grainy!

Good luck with your image editing!

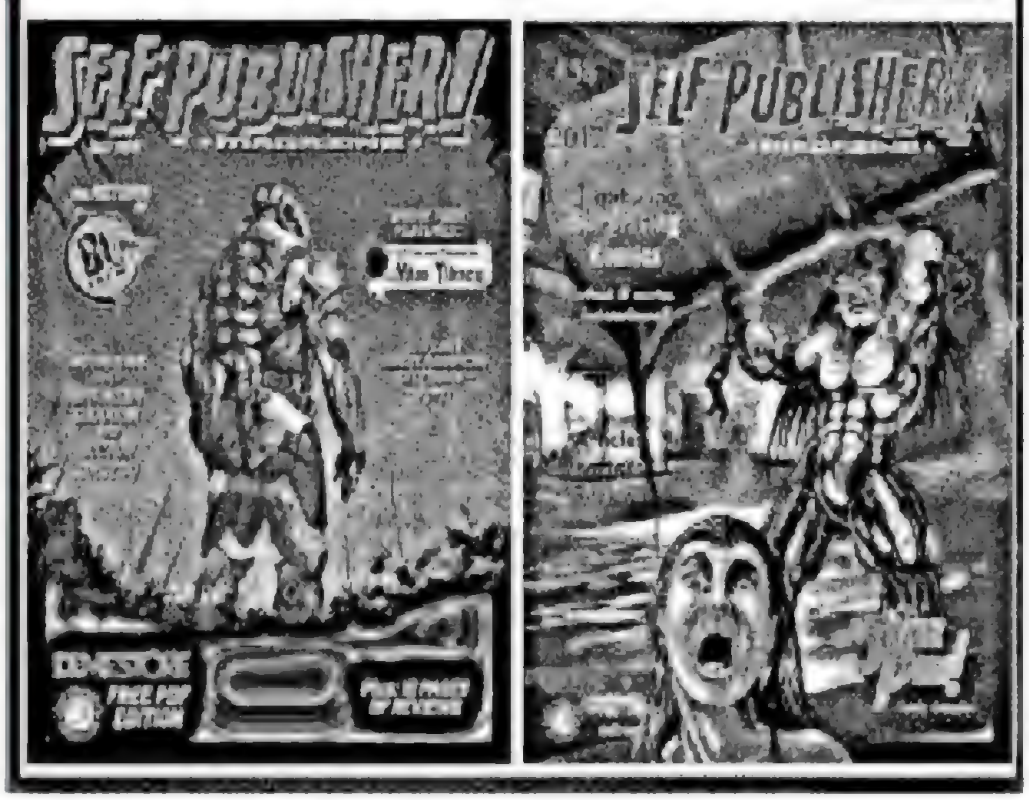
WANTED

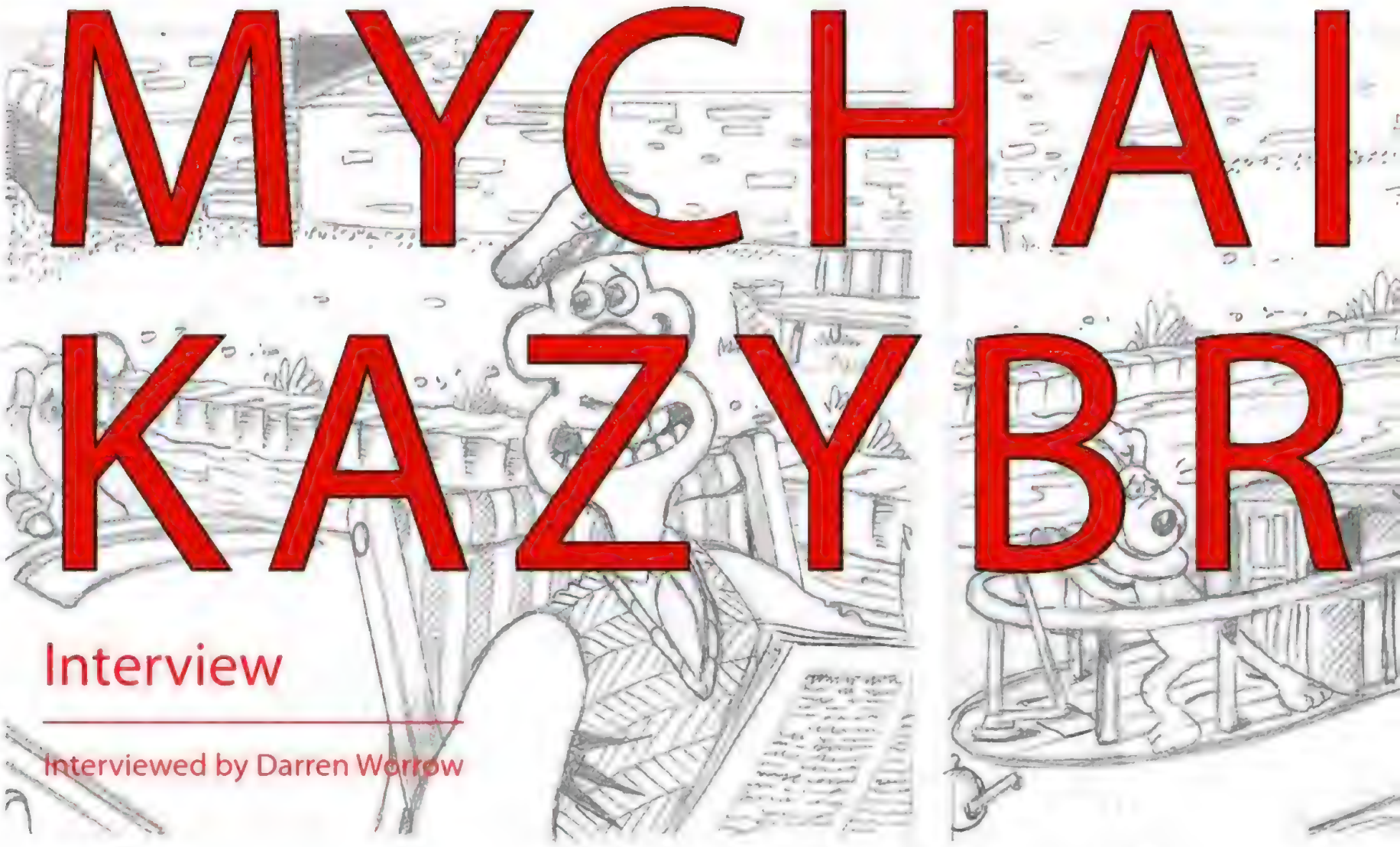
Enjoying this magazine?
Would you like to help make it?

SP! Magazine is looking for more contributors. We need more reviewers, more writers and interviews, more artists, more promotional staff, more distribution staff, more editorial staff....
Basically more of everything.

SPA itself is looking for someone to help build and run the Hall of Fame system

The SPA and SP! Magazine are run by volunteers - so sadly we cannot pay you. No experience necessary. If interested contact: SP@dimestoreproductions.com





MYCHAI KAZYBR

Interview

Interviewed by Darren Worrow

The first time I discovered the Kazybrid name was your strip in Comics International, where the reader contributed an idea for you to illustrate—at least that is what I recall. Does my memory serve me right, and if so, how many ideas were you sent that you thought, "No chance, I'm not going to draw that one!"?

The Comic Cuts strip ran for nine years in Comics International, featuring, of course, comic book dealer Mic Buff and his assistant Pete. Just to add at this stage that someone was totally convinced that Mic was based on somebody they knew, which—sorry to say—wasn't correct. However, Pete was based on real life comic book dealer Pete Smith, aka "Man In A Hat" of Nottingham. As you've rightly mentioned, the basic idea was that readers would kindly send in various suggestions for the script. These would be checked out by editor/publisher, Dez Skinn, who would in turn pass them on for transforming into a strip. I can't recall receiving any that I'd turn down, but I remember my partner Sarah Sier was really a great help in coming up with lots of good ideas.

Since I can only admire your skill in the drafting of the Aardman characters: Wallace & Gromit and Shaun the Sheep, how did this come about? Did they approach you?

I'd already produced some artwork for the Wallace & Gromit comic, not to mention the Shaun the Sheep comic. Therefore, based on this, I received an email from editor Rona Simpson, asking if I'd be interested in working on a new Wallace & Gromit daily cartoon strip appearing in The Sun newspaper. Apart from the fact that artist John Burns was to color it, I was keen to return to working on dailies, as I'd once produced a daily strip for provincial newspapers way back in the late 70s, which had lasted for six years. Thinking back on the Shaun the Sheep comic strip, he was a really wonderful character to get into. I recall on one occasion that, whilst working as per norm into the early hours, I became so sleepy that I could honestly see lots of tiny Shauns leaping all over the page! Another time, I'd worked on some Shaun pages until seven AM. Having scanned and sent them, I managed to grab a quick shower and get myself ready for the taxi arriving at eight AM, which was to take us to the airport to begin our vacation. Happy days!

I look back on your vast portfolio and realise just how many inspirational characters you have worked on, from DC Thompson's Minnie Minx and Bash Street Kids to Cosgrove Hal's Dangermouse and Count Duckula. Have you got a favourite?

Let me randomly think of some of my most favourite comic characters. Yeah, ok... Minnie Minx, the Bash Street Kids, Bananaman, Dangermouse and Count Duckula... is that enough now? What? Mychailo Kazybrid has spent time drawing all these guys? Alright then, what about The Tick, huh? Got you there... Oh, him too.

In fact, Mychailo has been in the comics industry for over 37 years and has numerous licenses under his belt for publishers like DC Thomson and Marvel UK. He now illustrates characters for Aardman Comics and creates some pretty crazy characters of his own. It's only justifiable that, while on my discovery of great British comics, I grab the time for a quick chat with him.

That's hard to say, as most times, each set of characters would bring with them something new. My very first DC Thompson strip was Minnie the Minx. It wasn't long after that I was given the task of working on The Bash St. Kids. The fun thing was that you were given the opportunity of not only producing work for the comic, but equally for the summer specials and annuals, not forgetting the library books. The great thing in drawing for the Beano/Dandy library books was that it allowed the chance to draw quite a variety of characters. In those days, the only main rule presented to me was that I had to draw them in the established style that readers had been used to enjoying down the years. I guess that I have to admit that I wasn't overly keen when the characters changed in order to fit in with the new image. Back in the 80s, and into the 90s, my time on Duckula and Dangermouse was linked with London Editions Magazines. I'd already had the pleasure of working with editor Brian M. Clarke on such properties as Masters of the Universe, so to work with him on some of their humor titles was a really good experience. I'd like to add that one character and title that was a real joy to draw was The Tick. I first became introduced to him via the TV cartoon show, so being given the chance to work on the series was first rate. I had the pleasure of producing eleven Tick books.

After over 37 years in the biz, can we fire up that flux capacitor and go back beyond all these licensed characters to chat about projects from your very beginnings? Did you self-publish?

Yes indeed, those early tender beginnings took place whilst I was living for a time in Birmingham, back in '74. My first serious created characters were for a young age group. The series was titled Wishy, Washy and Wig. They were a kind of cross between Mr. Men and fairytale folk. Whilst the stories were originally produced for schools, the format soon changed to audio visual aids. Er, audio tape and slides, to those still enjoying their youth! I was pleased—and also grateful—to have been able to pull together a team of eight people. This was to cover the color work over my inks, plus photography, narration and a complete musical backing. The finished result was a children's entertainment set, which consisted of a Wishy, Washy and Wig audio tape lasting approximately half an hour and 122 colour slides. The series format was yet again to change in 1982, when it was transferred to VHS video and also appeared on Cable TV. It finally returned to the printed page whilst I was working on Plus, a pre-school publication that lasted for eleven years. Because writer/editor Andrew Wooding had somehow wonderfully shaped the title into a traditional British humor children's comic, the strip was able to fit in well.

The second set of characters from around that period was a group of kids and rather strange cat. The daily cartoon strip Matt first saw light on April 18, 1979, within the pages of the provincial newspaper The Bradford Telegraph & Argus. I'd originally attempted to sell to the paper a Wishy, Washy & Wig cartoon strip, but upon spying a small doodle of Matt, editors, John Hewitt and Mike Priestly agreed to take it, if it could be drawn as a three-panel strip.

Your art is highly styled and I could examine forever it for influences, seeing perhaps, Baxendale and Ken Reid. But there's also a more US-comic-strip style, like Jim Davis', and then, I take another look and see areas that are classic US Marvel/DC (in The Tick, for example). What do you think of this analysis and can you identify any other influences on your work?

Sincere thanks for the kind comments. It's true to say that whilst any artist is influenced by various 'masters,' mine would certainly be such as the great Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Leo Baxendale, and David Law. I remember as a young boy of around seven years, saying to my father that when I grew up, I wanted to draw comic books. Dad came back with the normal reaction: "One day you'll get a proper job!" Looking back, I feel sorry for him, as he was a man from a small village in The Carpathian Mountains of the western Ukraine—of course this didn't make sense to Dad! However, as a kid I grew up on a diet of British humor comics in the late 50s and later, into the 60s, lots of Marvel/DC comics. Oh boy, what I'd give to still have them now, but I won't get started on that subject!

If you thought for one second that I had forgotten your lovely old ladies with the oversized assets, then you are very much mistaken! Can you tell us all about the Plastic Grannies?

The idea behind the Plastic Grannies came about some two-and-a-half to three years ago. One evening, whilst watching TV, for some reason, Sarah and I started to question what becomes of all the extra-enhanced glamour models, once they've reached their senior years. Whilst still thinking about this, I produced what was to be the first Plastic Grannies cartoon. A long time afterwards, I posted the pic on Facebook and was really pleased with the response. I went on to draw a few more and, thrilled with how they were received, decided to take the ladies in a new direction— the Busty Meadows Retirement Village. The Plastic Grannies Facebook page was put together to share the lives of those Senior Sisters of Sizzle, Edith, Ethel May, and Doris. Each time a new 'like' is added to their page, they'll rush to their local, Rancid Penguin for one or three drinkies (or more). It's wonderful to see how the world of these 95-year-old retired glamour models puts a smile on the faces of so many. Even at their age , they're still into producing homemade Old Dame Whisky, lap and pole dancing, sky diving, bikes and bikers, and speed dating... but easy on the speed!

I did hear their shout-out on Graham Norton's BBC Radio 2 show, which made me chuckle! Have you any other projects that you are currently working on?

At present, I'm involved in producing the artwork for a new comic book, Mr Custa and the Invasion of the Marigold Men, from writer Philip Whitmore. Philip also creates and produces a series of short Mr Custa radio slots. What interested me was that it's got a kind of "The Tick meets Retro" feel. Hope that makes sense! The cover art was produced first, allowing Philip to use it for any promotional purposes. Having done the pencils and inks, I was really pleased that John Burns was able to do the color work on it.

There are so many more things I could ask, I feel we have only just touched the tip of the iceberg! Is there anything more you would like to mention?

Apart from my sincere thanks for the chat, if anyone would like to check out my artwork, please feel free to look in on http://kazybrid-scharactercreation.blogspot.com

Equally, should anybody want to check out the Plastic Grannies at the Busty Meadows Retirement Village, they can be found at http://facebook.com/PlasticGrannies

One last, very serious question: in my old age, can I get a reduced rate for a room at the Busty Meadows retirement village, please?

That'll be based very much on your age at the time. I've been informed that any man below the age of 70 isn't safe! Edith's presently after husband number eight, seems it's something to do with her homemade mushroom soap; Ethel May can't understand as to why she keeps on getting this weird feeling of flight whenever she tends her strange new plants; as for Doris, apart from her love for her trike, she's one hot mama at 95!

Fill my bowl Ethel, fill my bowl! Thanks for the chat, Mychailo. Here's to more years of your great doodles!

Mr Custa Cover

MICHAEL R.
SLOANE
Walking Through the Belly of the Beast
"He was a soldier, covert operative, and homicide detective who stumbles into a conspiracy facilitated by his former handler...he is assisted by an information retrieval specialist (aka a hacker), and two private detectives...but, hot on his trail are two police detectives and a lot of assassins!"
A race against time...a war to win at all costs!
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THE SIGNIFIERS
WHAT IS THE YPYTLIC ??
ALSO STARRING LANDLARK, THE HEAT-SEEKING DWARF!!
PLUS: A TALK WITH TOM SCIOLI

Landlark has escaped from the Pollution Pioneers, joining with a coterie of music-obsessed free spirits.* They've made their way to Electric Turn-On's swinging pad in Hippyland.

M.R. Nano PRESENTS: LANDLARK THE HEAT-SEEKING DWARF!

SU-11

FRANCINE! HERE YOU GO, FRANCINE!
THE SOUNDWAVES ARE FED DIRECTLY FROM THE DRIVERS, SEE, INTO YOUR BRAIN.
RIGHT ON.
LOOK AT THAT DOG.
WHAT ARE YOU FEEDING HER?
PEPPERS.
THEY'RE MAKING HER JUMP AS HIGH AS A KITE!!
RUFF! RUFF!
RUFF! RUFF!
RUFF! RUFF!
15

IF ANYONE WANTS TO BOW OUT OF THIS HAPPENING, NOW'S THE TIME. YOU'LL STILL BE WELCOME HERE ANOTHER TIME.
NO?
NOT EVERYONE'S COMFORTABLE TAPPING INTO THE VOYST.
TINA.
WHAT WE'RE ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE, VERY FEW PEOPLE HAVE GONE THERE. IT MAY BE THE ONLY WAY TO FEEL THE VOYST WITHOUT GIVING UP CONTROL OF YOUR MIND.
I'M UP FOR THIS, MAN, BUT, UH... WHAT'S THE WORST THAT COULD, YOU KNOW? I MEAN, I GROK THE SCENE, BUT...
WHAT'S THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN? I DON'T MAKE ANY PROMISES. THIS ISN'T CLOSE TO BEING SANCTIONED. I CAN'T SAY IT'S SAFE.
YEAH, WELL, GIMMEE THOSE THINGS.
TRANSCENDENTAL VOYAGING, BROTHERS AND SISTERS?
16

17

story and art: Michael Neno! The book can be ordered at: www.nenoworld.com

COMIC REVIEWS

Assailant Comics Binary Gray #1— Variant

Review: I think every superhero comic fan has spent time thinking about making their own comic hero. And hundreds upon hundreds of them have and do. So, here I hold one such effort, and by nature, we know, it has the chips stacked against it from inception. How does such an effort ever hope to stack up against other superhero comics?

Well, by being VERY GOOD. In artwork, design, story pace, and characterization, this is a superior piece of work, deserving of attention. It introduces us to a world where we know there are other super-beings; it gives us an origin story without it being overtly contrived or done before. It is entertaining, and it primes us to care about the character and want to read more. I'm a fan.

There is only ONE thing in this book that I found less than perfect. The swearing. Now, I understand reality and how swearing is a part of natural speech. I also understand not wanting to put #$%^$ -type words on the page instead of swear words, just to censor yourself. But this book does seem to go out of its way to punctuate with swear words, and it isn't necessary. By simply NOT swearing, this book would have been more accessible to a younger audience that could quite literally latch onto it as their own Spider-Man, and grow up with it. Now, I understand how easy it would be to make an edition of

this book that didn't swear... so the option is always open, should the movie rights hit and larger print runs become necessary, and this goes through the roof.

Not saying that it's going to happen, but wouldn't it be nice? Every kid who reads superhero comics wishes they could make one. This one really has a shot. Go get a copy.—Ian.

28pg Full Size, Full Color comic. First printing, March 2012. Written by Chris Charlton;, art by Rowel Roque and Anthonie Wilson.

Cover price: $3.99

Order from: http://assailantcomics.com/where-to-buy/

[02] Bamn Comics Bamn #3

Review: I actually picked up three issues of this series at SPACE this spring, so I'm going to break with my normal review policy of reviewing #1, and then saving the other issues for later rounds through the box, because... well, if I don't start catching up I never will. So I'm reading all three for this review; let's see what we get....

First of all, the artwork advances. It's quite stylized—cartoony, a touch towards mangaish... but it tells the story well and has some nice touches. Visually, #2 is a step back, missing any shading efforts—and then #3 jumps ahead light years in clarity and design, but... drops a lot of backgrounds that would really help this out. So you can tell this artist is working on his craft, and is improving, but has a ways to go. I'd like to see where they are art-wise NOW, as these are from 2009.

The story is fun; it's about a washed-up wrestler and a group of wannabe kid wrestlers. I am kinda sad to know that there hasn't been any more of these since these three came out, and therefore this story is still incomplete. As it's the characters and story that make any good comic worth following, this was off to a decent start, heading the right direction... but should I advise people to seek it out, knowing that the story is not being worked on? I can see on the website that the artist is doing new projects, and perhaps that is where my recommendation should lean. Check him out; if you like his work, these are definitely worth having... but I suspect his newer work is much better. —Ian

28pg Full Size, B+W w/color cover comic. First printing, 2009. Story by Troy-Jeffrey Allen, art by Jay Payne.

Cover price: $3.00

Order from: http://www.bamncan.com/p/store.html

[03] Floating Dock Comics The Words #1-5

Review: Seven forbidden Words create temporary power spheres that alter physics. Eric Rock, a bookstore employee, inherits one of the Words. Guardian monks in China can hear him whisper it, even on the other side of the earth, and hunt him down. This is a second print Lucas-style re-tweaking done to smooth out transitions and make the fight scenes more riveting. I have the first versions (#1-3, expanded 2nd print to 1-4) and they're really good. It's a pretty complex story that will climax at issue #8. I wanna see where it goes! —Wade

Comic book sized, full color. Published, Spring 2012. Written by Richard Mann, art by Rick Marcks, colors by Harold MacKinnon and letters by Kathryn Renta.

Cover Price $3.99 plus $1.50 postage, each

Order from: Floating Dock Comics, PO Box 8247, Portland, OR 97207. Or find online at: http://floatingdockcomics.com/

[04] Hound Comics Soul Heir #1

The Royal Marshall Captain Haki begins his mission of revenge against the notorious criminal empire known as The Dragon Syndicate. To gain information about the Syndicate and the whereabouts of the Syndicate bosses, our hero starts his search at the Dead Fishes; a shabby and rundown bar/tavern where some of the nastiest criminals in the land are rumored to meet. Haki's plan is to shake down the patrons of the bar for information about the Syndicate, but to his surprise, a Syndicate general known as Skar just happens to be in attendance. After a brief exchange of words between Haki and the general, the Dead Fishes suddenly explodes into chaos.

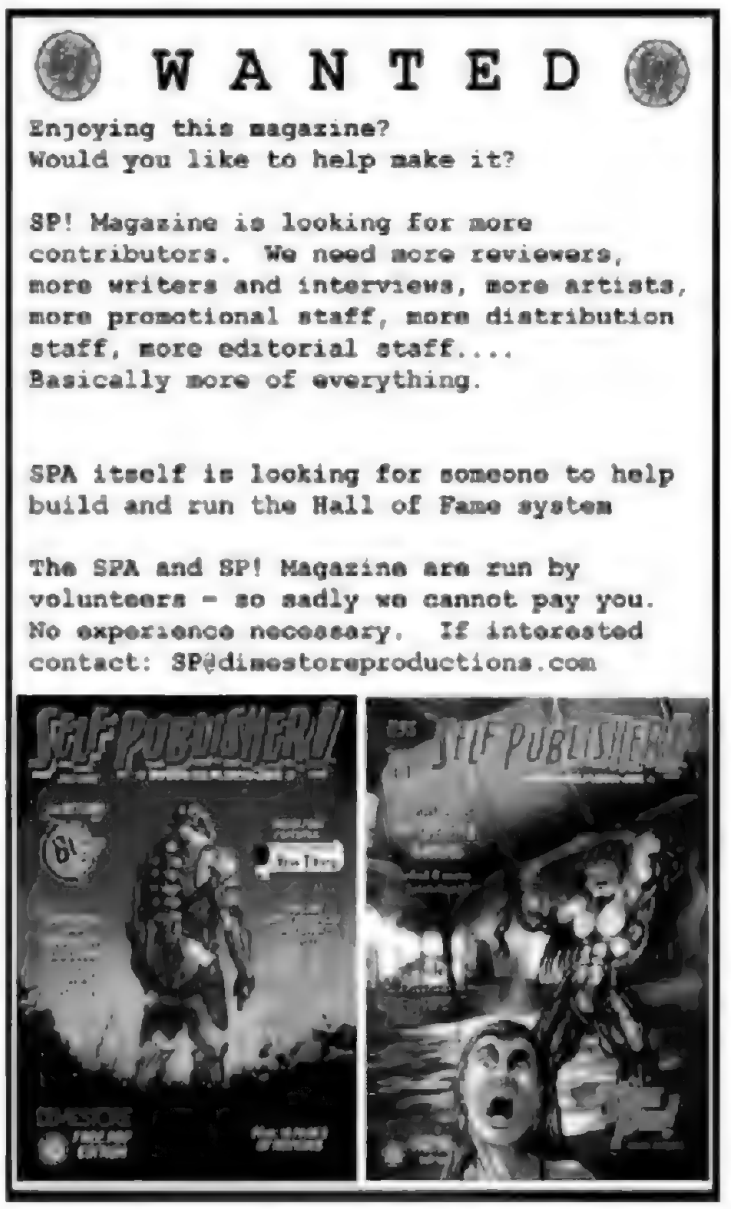
Review: For a comic where very little really happens, I found myself enjoying this very much. I think the very animation-ready wonderfully-colored artwork has elevated this book from being just another "desolate world/final hero going against impossible odds" story... and given it an eye candy edge. It leaves plenty to be explored in subsequent issues: who are the marshals and syndicates? There are even other characters talked about but not yet seen. And it does this cleverly, without trying to cram in tons of back-story, which I've seen bog down some such tales. Instead, we're just left wondering. Here's my only question: with all I see going on at their website, what's the schedule on this? How is this not going to get lost in the mire of 500 other new books competing for people's attention? I'm going to do my part and give this a "Yes, check this out" recommendation. And I'll hope to see more. —Ian

28pg Full Size, Full Color comic PDF. First Printing, 2012. By Ocie Talor and Anthony Taylor.

Cover price: $5.00

Order from: http://comics.drive-thrustuff.com/product/106532/Soul-Heir---%231%3A-The-Dead-Fishes

Or: http://www.houndcomics.com/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Basically more of everything.
SPA itself is looking for someone to help build and run the Hall of Fame system
The SPA and SP! Magazine are run by volunteers - so sadly we cannot pay you. No experience necessary. If interested contact: SP@dimestoreproductions.com
SELF PUBLISHER!
SELF PUBLISHER!

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Binary Gray #1— Variant

Review: I think every superhero comic fan has spent time thinking about making their own comic hero. And hundreds upon hundreds of them have and do. So, here I hold one such effort, and by nature, we know, it has the chips stacked against it from inception. How does such an effort ever hope to stack up against other superhero comics?

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There is only ONE thing in this book that I found less than perfect. The swearing. Now, I understand reality and how swearing is a part of natural speech. I also understand

05 Josh Juresko
Bad Breath Comics #4

Review: Juresko's quirky, off the wall, and slightly over-the-edge humor is scattered throughout this delightfully unsettling anthology. Stepbrother Scary (of the EC horror type) opens and closes this collection. Professor Yuck-Yuck ponders the worth of history to the camera; there's a feature on fake comic book covers from the 50s, another on how "normal"⊠ people react to Alan Moore in an elevator, a Twilight Zone style story that doesn't end like a Twilight Zone episode, and other odd and highly entertaining stuff residing inside. I can really get into Juresko's art style, as it's clean and slightly subversive. Get it now! Somehow! —Wade

28pg Comic Book size, B+W w/color cover. Spring 2012. Written, drawn, and published by Josh Juresko.

Drawings and Musical interests or http://badbreathcomics.blogspot.com

06 Monument Comics
Topsville Comedy Book #2

Review: Sometimes, it's all about flavor. Like, all chocolate is not the same; sometimes you get a taste of something you haven't tried before and it's just, like, yum. That's the feeling I have, after reading this minicomic. I've seen a lot of goofy, scratchily drawn minicomics. They don't always connect; the person just doesn't have the practice to pull it off. This one does. I'm not going to say it's the best-drawn minicomic I ever saw,; I'm just going to say that the creator has settled into their style and it works. The star of the mini is the story/characters. It's well-paced, funky, and different. A touch of Beavis and Butthead, but not as stupid or juvenile. Comics like this one are what make small press so much more interesting than anything you would ever find in something aimed more mainstream. Absolutely worth your effort to go to his website, see some more of his comics there, and track down a copy of this for yourself. —Ian

28pg Minicomic, B+W w/color cover. First printing, 2010. By Chris Monday.

Price: $3.50

Order at: http://flyingweevil.storenvy.com/products/411358-eeeee-is-for-egg

http://flyingweevil.wordpress.com/

07 M.R. Neno Productions
The Signifiers #1

Review: I wanted to try to avoid the usual comparison of Michael Neno's art style to Kirby's. If you dig into his visual style, yeah, you know the influence… but Michael shuffles into his own flavor. It's got grit, it's got depth, and it's got background details. It tells the story and conveys character emotion. So the point is: Michael is a really good artist, loves what he's doing, and it shows.

Now, digging into the story, we have a world gone bad, in which people can be changed into part-animal things; we're not really told why or to what end. We gather that a number of these half-people are living together under the protection of a mysterious woman, who people seem to be trying to find. Nothing is quite what it seems, and then we meet the astral forms of who (I am thinking) are the real driving force that the comic will focus on… and it all just makes me want to keep reading.

There are nuances and in-jokes sprinkled through the book. I'm not sure I got 'em all, and many of the ones I did get, many others might not. But that just adds a depth that shows the true genius of this book. It's timeless, it's dated, it's just not going to be what you expect—no matter what you bring to it. So, it's definitely worth a look and I look forward to more. —Ian

52pg Full Size comic, B+W w/color cover. First printing, Spring 2010. By Michael Neno.

$7.50 postage paid,

Order at: http://www.nenoworld.com/

08 Mutant Cactus Comics
Tales of Awesome #1

Review: Losing control of robots is a long-standing and common theme in science fiction. Shall we say it's been done before? This comic takes a very straightforward approach to the topic. It offers no new insights. It doesn't really even bother to make it much of a conflict. It's basically saying that after robots take over and do away with humans, the robots will stop functioning and nature can heal the planet.

Which is fine. It's drawn well, it's not overtly amateurish in its presentation—meaning it looks good. But when you call your comic Tales of Awesome… you'd think something was going to be awesome in it. And I'm sorry, nothing in this book really rises to that. So, I go to check what the creators are doing now… and look at the website. And it has nothing about comic books on it. It's about selling buttons. It's still run by the letterer of this comic… but… no mention of this book anywhere, or any other books I can find. Maybe robots took him over? —Ian

28pg Full Size, B+W w/color cover comic. First printing, October 2009. Written by Derek Watson, art by Robert Gant.

$3.00 cover price

Track down at: http://www.mutantcactus.com/

28pg Full Size, B+W w/color cover comic. First printing, 2009. Story by Troy-Jeffrey Allen, art by Jay Payne.

Cover price: $3.00

09 Pinwheel Comics
Man of God #1

John Morris dies in a fire, but something brought him back to fight the evil in the world. What can it be and what is his new sacred mission? Find out here!

Review: In Chicago, Illinois, John Morris has been burned alive. He is nothing but ash at the altar of a local Lutheran church and he is all but considered a goner.

However, what set him on fire? Was it something supernatural? That appears to be the case, as he wakes up in a hospital morgue. Morris is able to touch the mortician and finds out the mortician is a necrophiliac.

As Morris escapes into the night, he breaks into a costume store. Before he can put on a costume and leave, he meets the owner and finds out with one touch that the owner is a pedophile.

The issue ends with the setting up of the Mafioso villain Morris will face in the future.

For a first-time issue, I was reminded much of Spawn—a burned guy is returned to the world to fight evil. However, Spawn is bombastic, filled with Todd MacFarlane-like art that stretches beyond the panels. Man of God is subtle and filled character and plot development.

It is like watching a film noir, with the detective in a trench coat and fedora stepping into the night.

Is it worth the read? Very much so.

Writer and creator Craig Partin tells a fun story and the art by penciler Yvel Guichet and inker Stu Berryhill really captures its spirit.

The follow up stories, "Land of Flies: Pipeline" and "The Adventures of Bennie and Butch" are fun, too, and worth a glance. —Don

4pg Full Size, B+W w/color cover PDF. First printing, April 2012. By Craig Partin, Yvel Guichet, Stu Berryhill, and Bob Hall.

$3.50 cover price

Track down at: www.facebook.com/manofgodcomic

10 Quarantine Comics
Araura #1

Review: This comic has flaws. Some in the printing, some in the editing, and some in the content itself. I think I am correct in remembering that when they gave me this title at SPACE, they stated up front that this was one of an initial printing, and that the newer printing fixed many things. I can see on their website that the cover shown is slightly different from this book's, so I am going to give some leniency on the typos, and assume they are fixed. This, however, doesn't fix the problems with the basic story.

Something that caught me right off was a character thinking "I know those footsteps" Really? That just threw me. The artwork has some nice bits, leaning heavily on manga style for both visual cues and pacing. You have a bad guy seeking —well, liars who are hiding what the guy killing people says is evil. You have young kids with, I guess, ranger skills, going on an escort mission to protect someone important. What you don't have is a good idea of why this is going on, or how it will be different from similar stories we've all seen before.

This is in sharp contrast to another comic I reviewed a few days ago, where even less actually happened in the comic... but… they were able to imply the grander scheme of things and bring forth interest in characters they didn't even show in the issue. This book didn't capture me. I don't know if it was that footstep thing at the start, or the fact that all we know about where this is taking place in the first five pages… is that they are outdoors. The book needed something in it to grab us. I would also suggest the creators make sure the newer version of it doesn't have a statement in the book saying "I hope you don't think it sucks" on the text page. Carry yourself with more confidence, and your books will be better for it. —Ian

20pg Full Size, B+W w/color cover comic. First printing, 2010. By Ray Coffman.

$3.00 cover price

Purchase at: http://www.quarantine-comics.com/store.html

11 S. Mann
AH!

Review: Based on a dream by the artist/writer, a very sinister being dwells among the creepy critters in the basement laundry room! Spooky, quirky, and cute! —Wade

Double-sided 8.5"x11" letter sized foldy comic. Published, September 2012. Written and drawn by S. Mann.

50 cents, $1.00 ppd. from S. Mann, PO Box 86153, Portland, OR 97286-0153

75 cents on http://www.etsy.com/shop/artsymann

Interested in having your next project reviewed by the staff here at SP Magzine?

Send it in and we will include it in a future Issue!!

RODNEY ROGER

REALIZING THE SELF-PUBLISHING DREAM: AN INTERVIEW WITH RODNEY ROGER

Interviewed by SP Magazine!

RODNEY ROGER LAUNCHED R-Comics in 2010. In addition to being the owner and publisher, Rodney is currently writing Recollection and Phenomenal, two R-Comics titles premiering this year. When he isn't working on R-Comics, Rodney reviews other comic books and works as a scriptwriter for a different company. He took time out of his busy schedule to talk to Self-Publisher! Magazine about R-Comics, its current offerings, and what lies ahead.

SP!: What made you decide to found R-Comics?

RR: I always loved comics. Actually, Ellen, when I was 17, I wrote several stories and it's always been my dream to create my own stories. Years passed, and after college, I got a day job, so I didn't do anymore writing, but I still read comics, not only from the big four, but also from indie publishers. It was in 2009 that I came up with the idea of creating my own comic book. Through networking, mostly via the web, I decided I wanted to launch my own publishing company.

SP!: What do you think influenced your creativity and got you writing?

RR: I'm an introvert, and love living in my own dream world. That's why I read comics. I'm always fantasizing about what could happen in a given situation. The combination of reading and fantasizing made me want to write. It's also a form of escapism for me. Creating my own world and characters is a way for me to deal with the cold harsh

reality of modern-day society.

SP!: Let's talk about Recollection. What can you tell us about the plot and characters?

RR: Recollection tells the story of Skyler Jean. She is a young woman with a troubled mind. She works as an exotic dancer and has difficulty differentiating fiction from reality. She hires the expert hitman, Eddie Lawrence.

Eddie himself is haunted by visions of his time as a soldier and the wars he's fought. Skyler hires him to kill Leonard Jenkins, someone she thinks is responsible for the tragic events of her youth. But is this man really the guilty party?

im Starks is a lawyer, hired by the underworld to track down Eddie Lawrence. He has some old debts to pay, which is why a mysterious syndicate is forcing him to follow Eddie.

SP!: How about the creative team behind it?

RR: Ferry Ickhwano is an artist from Indonesia that really understands how to draw in a pulp noir style. He has the knowledge and expertise to break the panels down and he knows the difference between drawing a mainstream comic, and a noir thriller.

Nia Sahadewa is also from Indonesia, and she does the coloring for Recollection.

Story and script are written by myself. I have a team of editors to make sure that the flow of the story and artwork is right.

SP!: What do you feel makes Recollection different from other noir thrillers?

RR: When I created Recollection, I thought it would be interesting to write it in a style I felt could bring diverse subjects closer to each other. The problems we have to face in the real world, transposed to a fictitious universe. Eddie's demons, Sky's mental block over her traumatic youth, Leonard's obsessive behaviour, and Jim's mistakes, which have landed him in the clutches of the underworld. Everyone makes decisions as they grow and if they don't make the right ones, those decisions will haunt them for the rest of their lives, unless they do something to break the cycle.

SP!: Let's move on to Phenomenal, which is a totally different genre. What can you tell me about this book?

RR: It's a supernatural comic book starring adopted sisters Katie and Amy Cassidy. While Katie is the mature one and a true leader, Amy is more of a Valley Girl, who actually loves to party, rather than fight demons. As an extra, besides having a 20-page story, we also provide fans with a backstory in the first three issues, which tells the origin of the Cassidy sisters, so the readers get to know their background and how they got into the business.

SP!: And how about the people behind this one?

RR: The series itself is written by me, pencils and inks are provided by Indonesian artist Nunun Nurjannah. Colors are done by Philippine colorist Hernane Lopez Jr. The origin story is drawn and colored by Rommel Fabian and Victorino Muyo. Letters for both stories are done by fresh new letterer James Israelson. Rounding off the credits is a team of editors (Luis M. Cruz, Richard Marks, and Anthony Zicari). I am truly honored to be working with all these talents.

SP!: I notice that you're marketing this title to fans of Supernatural and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Beyond the demon-hunting angle, what other elements do you feel will resonate with this target audience?

RR: Phenomenal, along with some other ongoing series, is a buildup to a bigger threat for Earth that will culminate in a one-shot, featuring all the important characters of the R-Comics universe. Besides hunting demons, Katie and Amy are going to fight super-villains from other R-Comics series. We'll also see some character development, as Katie and Amy face their past, and a lot of joking around, especially on Amy's part. But there's also a serious story, where the girls talk about being adopted, how it impacted them and how they deal with it now.

SP!: What's next for R-Comics?

RR: A whole lot more, haha. We're releasing the R-Comics Presents… anthology in late December. Besides that, in 2013 we launch the ongoing series, Seductive, A.L.F.A., and Broken Cortex.

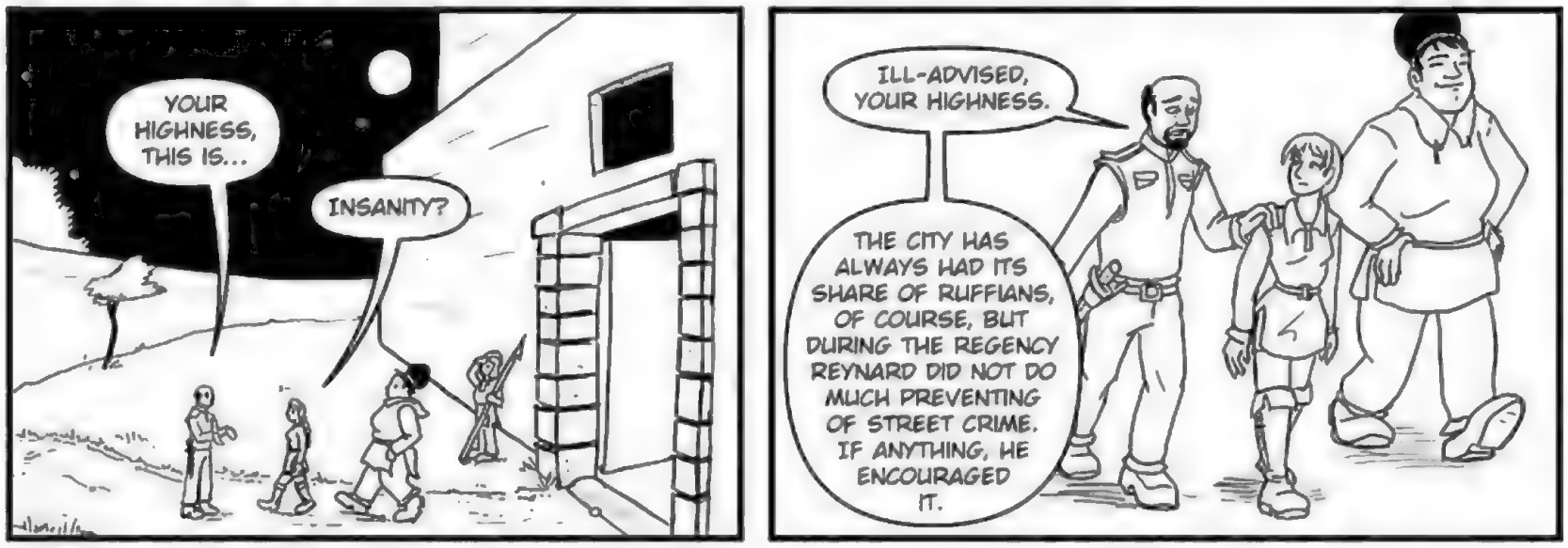
SP!: Anything you'd like to add that we haven't touched on yet?

RR: Well, Ellen, I actually do have something else to mention. Recollection #1 is on sale in November and Phenomenal #1, in December. Don't forget to visit us at our r-comics.nl website and our online shop. If you are interested in reading more about our projects and want to talk about the R-COMICS universe, feel free to visit our Facebook Fan page and also e-mail us anytime you like. That's all for now.

Check out R-Comics at http://r-comics.nl/ or on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/rodney.roger.comics?ref=ts&fref=ts.

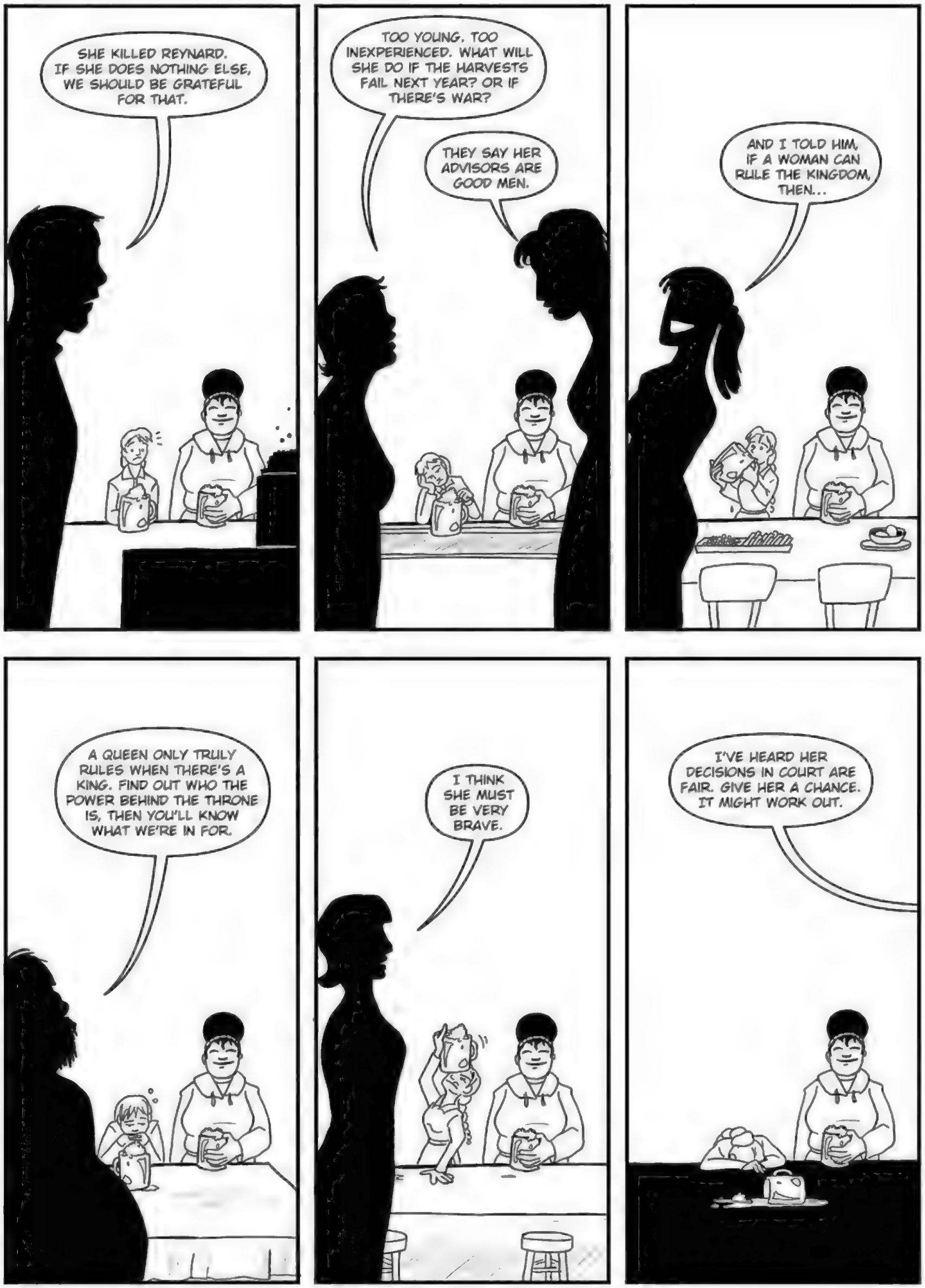
RICK SILVA ALICE VEIDT

STONE

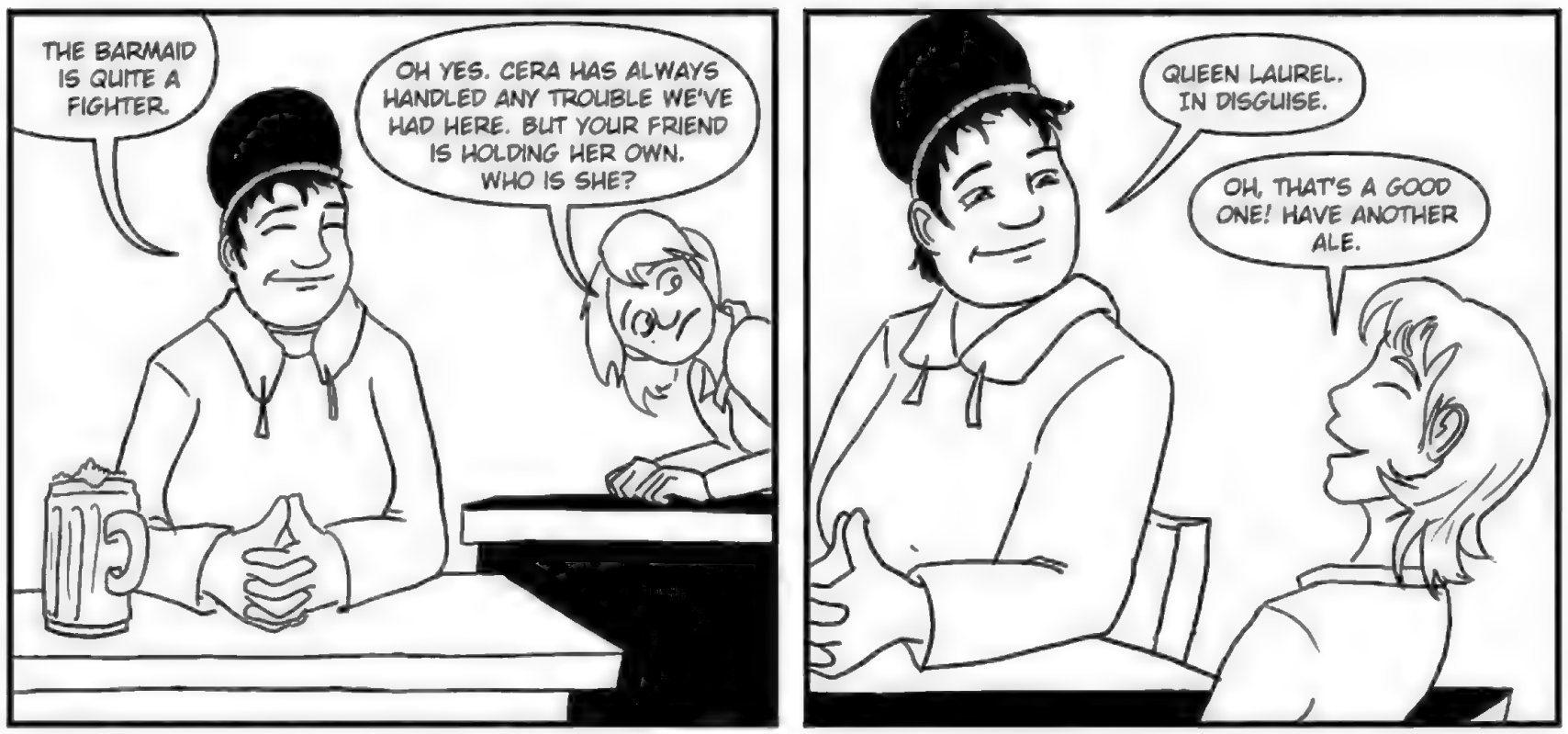

YOUR HIGHNESS, THIS IS...
INSANITY?
ILL-ADVISED, YOUR HIGHNESS.
THE CITY HAS ALWAYS HAD ITS SHARE OF RUFFIANS, OF COURSE, BUT DURING THE REGENCY REYNARD DID NOT DO MUCH PREVENTING OF STREET CRIME. IF ANYTHING, HE ENCOURAGED IT.
IT'S MY KINGDOM, GENERAL. I'D DO WELL TO GET TO KNOW IT. RUFFIANS AND ALL.
WE'LL BE BACK BEFORE DAWN, ALEM.
SO, WHERE ARE WE GOING?
LUREM TOLD ME TODAY WAS MARKET DAY. WITH SO MANY MEN CONSCRIPTED AND WORSE UNDER REYNARD, THERE WILL BE MANY WOMEN IN THE CITY BRINGING GOODS TO MARKET.
THE TAVERNS WILL BE FULL OF THEM. WE'LL BLEND RIGHT IN.
IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF YOU, THEN YOU NEED TO SPEND A LITTLE TIME IN DISGUISE.
ARE YOU SURE THIS ISN'T JUST AN EXCUSE TO SAMPLE ALL THE LOCAL ALES?
YOU'VE HEARD THE SAYING ABOUT WHAT YOU USE TO KILL TWO BIRDS?

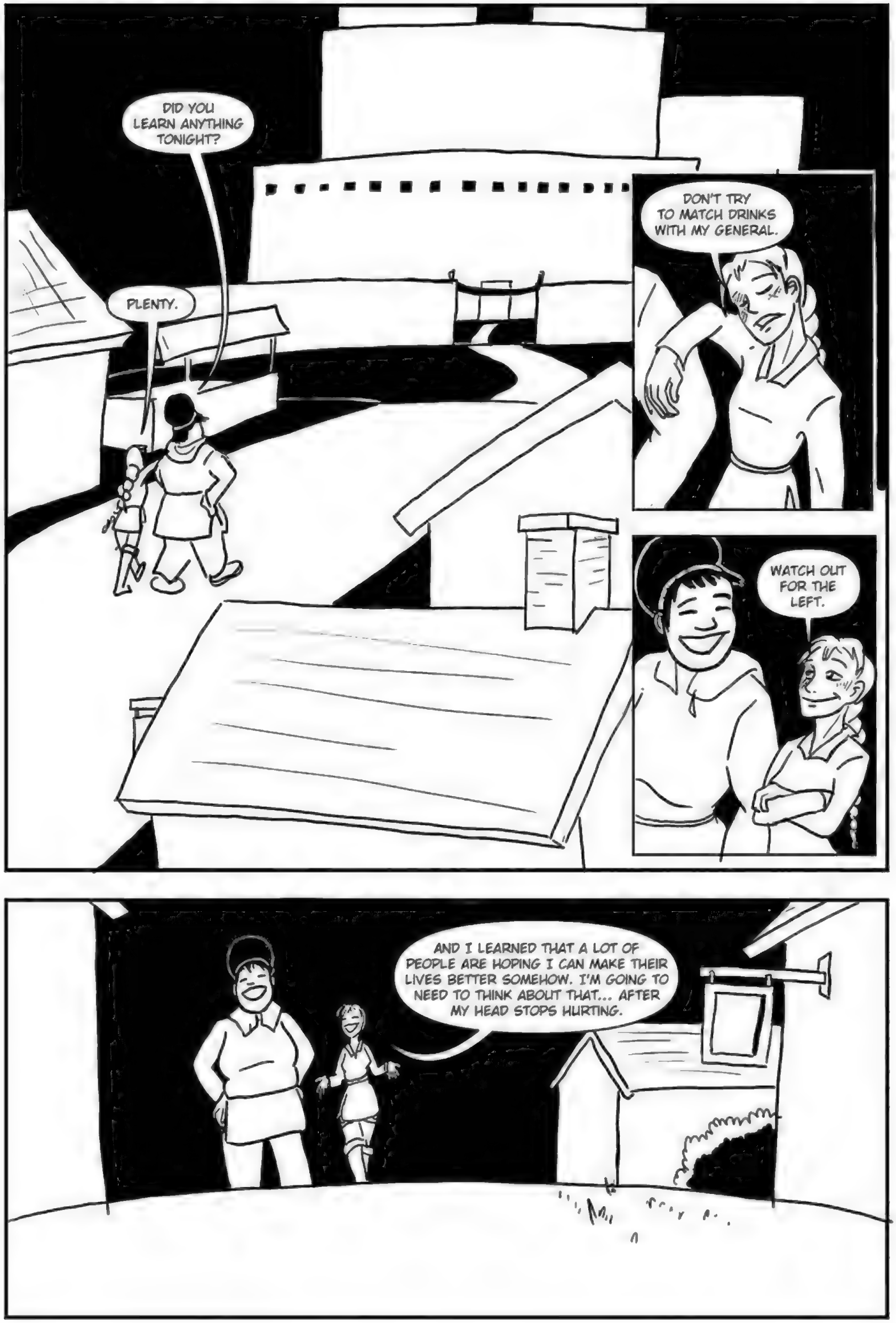
Stone #2

Publisher: Dandelion Studios
Date: 2012
Writer: Rick Silva
Artist: Alice Veidt


SHE KILLED REYNARD. IF SHE DOES NOTHING ELSE, WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR THAT.
TOO YOUNG. TOO INEXPERIENCED. WHAT WILL SHE DO IF THE HARVESTS FAIL NEXT YEAR? OR IF THERE'S WAR?
THEY SAY HER ADVISORS ARE GOOD MEN.
AND I TOLD HIM, IF A WOMAN CAN RULE THE KINGDOM, THEN...
A QUEEN ONLY TRULY RULES WHEN THERE'S A KING. FIND OUT WHO THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE IS, THEN YOU'LL KNOW WHAT WE'RE IN FOR.
I THINK SHE MUST BE VERY BRAVE.
I'VE HEARD HER DECISIONS IN COURT ARE FAIR. GIVE HER A CHANCE. IT MIGHT WORK OUT.

WELL NONE OF THE ROYAL FAMILY EVER DID ME ANY FAVORS.
BUT AREN'T YOU EXCITED? I'M SO GLAD WE HAVE A WOMAN ON THE THRONE NOW.
WELL I SAY SHE OUGHT TO LEARN HER PLACE LIKE ALL OF YOU. HOW ABOUT A KISS, LOVE? THAT'S ALL YOU OR HER HIGHNESS ARE GOOD FOR!
POW
NO BRAWLING IN HERE, WENCH.
HE DESERVED THAT!
WRONG ANSWER. BUT I GUESS I SHOULD HAVE SAID NO BRAWLING UNLESS YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH ME.
POW!


THE BARMAID IS QUITE A FIGHTER.
OH YES. CERA HAS ALWAYS HANDLED ANY TROUBLE WE'VE HAD HERE. BUT YOUR FRIEND IS HOLDING HER OWN. WHO IS SHE?
QUEEN LAUREL. IN DISGUISE.
OH, THAT'S A GOOD ONE! HAVE ANOTHER ALE.
SOME HELP HERE?
WATCH OUT FOR HER LEFT.
SLAM
GK
POW!
YOU TOO?
NOT TONIGHT, FRIEND. YOU MADE YOUR POINT. WE'LL PAY FOR THE DAMAGE AND THEN SOME, SO HOW ABOUT QUITTING WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD?


DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING TONIGHT?
PLENTY.
DON'T TRY TO MATCH DRINKS WITH MY GENERAL.
WATCH OUT FOR THE LEFT.
AND I LEARNED THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE HOPING I CAN MAKE THEIR LIVES BETTER SOMEHOW. I'M GOING TO NEED TO THINK ABOUT THAT... AFTER MY HEAD STOPS HURTING.

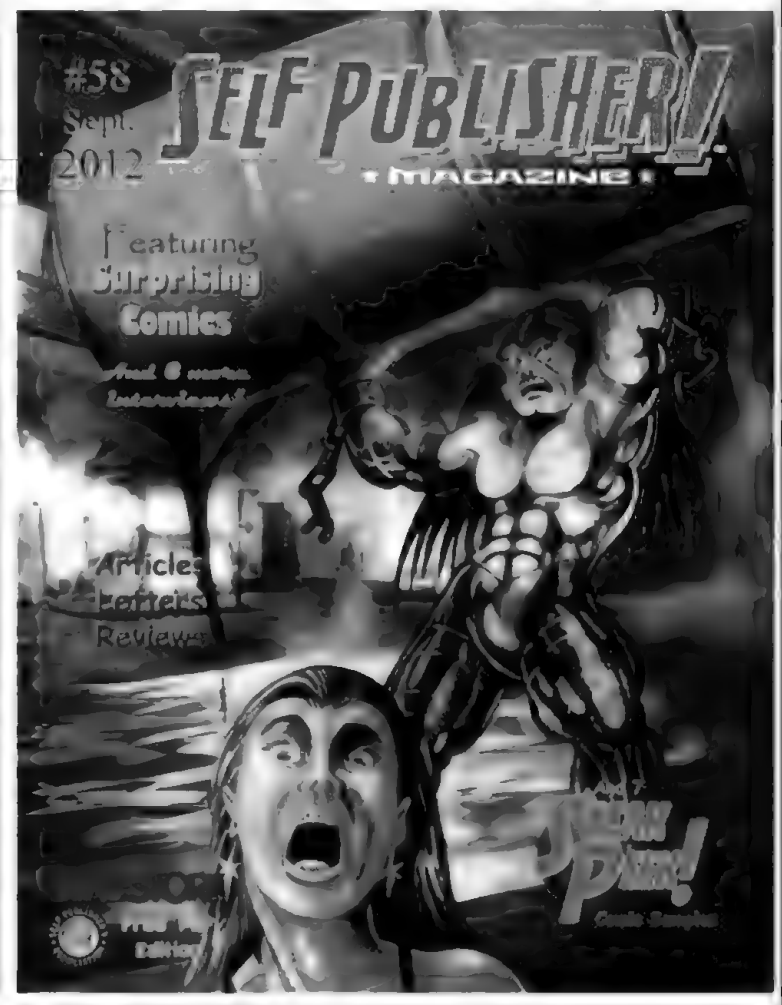
W A N T E D

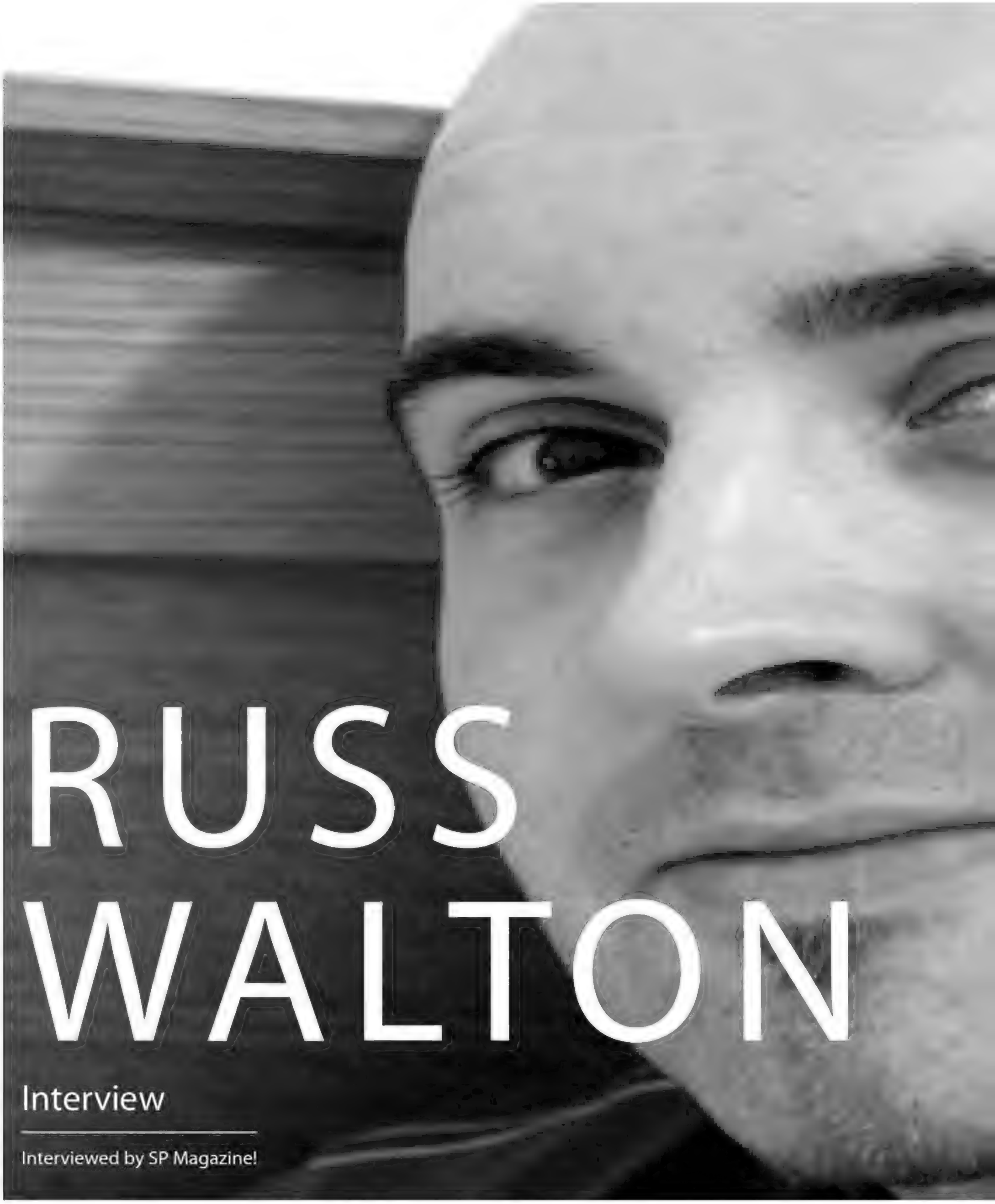
Enjoying this magazine?
Would you like to help make it?

SP! Magazine is looking for more contributors. We need more reviewers, more writers and interviews, more artists, more promotional staff, more distribution staff, more editorial staff....
Basically more of everything.

SPA itself is looking for someone to help build and run the Hall of Fame system

The SPA and SP! Magazine are run by volunteers - so sadly we cannot pay you. No experience necessary. If interested contact: SP@dimestoreproductions.com




RUSS
WALTON
Interview
Interviewed by SP Magazine!

OVER THE WEEKEND I had the absolute pleasure of interviewing Russell Walton (Grim Rascal to his friends). Over a couple of days, emails flew back and forth, as I got to know this eccentric and talented artist. In all, I would say my life has improved based

Russell lives in Wilnecote, West Midlands in the United Kingdom, an area which made me think of men in hard hats walking out of a mine, covered in coal dust. I could just imagine Russell sitting on a bench with a sketch pad, doodling out the wacky, strange, stylistic, and somehow truthful comic he sent me. He grew up in Bury, Greater Manchester, which accounts for his take on life.

This married soon-to-be father has a great outlook on life. His ever-changing job environment has allowed him to really enjoy his current avocation, even when dealing with the doldrums of life. When asked about it, he just commented that he had a job as a clerical assistant at one time that was way worse. Now, at least he can enjoy the technical aspect of dealing with spreadsheets, which he says can be really interesting when he gets involved with them.

SP: Publishing on your own must take a lot of time. Do you not have any hobbies?

Russell: Yes, I do. A stress counsellor from work once said I have too many hobbies for one person and need to get rid of some. Drawing takes up most of my time, but I tend to try my hand at writing too. I'm slowly getting into the idea of starting a horror novel. I also still try to work out a lot and general things like that, but preparing for the new baby takes up most of my time now.

SP: New baby? Congratulations. Do you have many children?

Russell: No, this is our first and due November 10th. (In theory, he will be on time.)

SP: I bet you've had a lot of jobs over the years. What was one of the worst?

Russell: My first job as a clerical assistant at Tetrosyl; I just hated it. It was a very busy office and everyone seemed unhappy. I had almost no training and they expected me to work long hours for no extra money, just to keep up. I was glad to leave.

SP: I hope your current job is better.

Russell: It is. I'm working as a data administrator. The technical stuff with spreadsheets can really be interesting when I get involved in it, but that can change when I'm asked to fix mundane issues for some users, especially when it is the hundredth time.

SP: So you're an artist. How did that start?

Russell: I used to lay on the floor face down in the living room, swinging my legs in the air, while my parents watched TV. I guess that is when it first happened. It was great for my parents, because it was before remote controls, so they had me change the channel for them.

SP: So, you drew when you were young. What did you draw?

Russell: Really can't remember, but it was probably monsters or something. My dad used to watch a log of horror films, so I used to draw something related to the monsters I'd see on T.V.

SP: Do you think what your parents watched influenced your drawing style?

Russell: Yeah, no doubt about that. My dad watched a lot of horror films, as I mentioned, so I quickly became the weird kid who could draw amazing monsters, but not much else. I remember another kid who could draw and he really was amazing; it was almost like he was secretly an adult. Other kids would go to him if they wanted a drawing of the Muppets or He-Man, but come to me for a dragon or a werewolf. It's no surprise that some of my better creations now are things like zombies or demons. I've started a project with Reaper Comics that is a horror wrestling comic, and it takes full advantage of my childhood talents (and childish humour).

SP: You're an X-Men fan; when did that happen?

Russell: When I was younger, I used to go to a place called Blackpool every year with my mom. Back then, the place was full of the old video game/arcade machines. I was obsessed with a dual screen scrolling beat-em-up of X-Men; I was always aware of X-Men, but never read it. Thanks to the sheer avalanche of merchandise Marvel produced, I was totally hypnotised by the franchise. From there, I started to collect almost anything I could on X-Men; luckily it was the Jim Lee era, and his artwork blew me away and hooked me even more. I still see that era as being the best of X-Men, and it's probably thanks to how amazing Jim Lee made it look.

SP: So which X-Man would you want to be?

Russell: I've always been a big Colossus fan, so the standard answer should probably be him, but Multiple Man would suit me more, so I'll say that.

SP: So, why Multiple Man?

Russell: Well, I'm always complaining I have too much to do, and I'd love the idea of just sending someone else to do all my chores for me so I can relax more. I could even send a clone to go to work for me so I can draw more; bliss! Multiple Man's power would be way too handy to turn down.

SP: So you don't want to be Colossus. Why not?

Russell: Colossus is my favourite and probably always will be. Transforming into a cross between a Greek god and a cyborg just always looked incredibly cool to me, and he always seemed to be the big hitter on the team, but with a gentle heart that added humanity. The Ultimate's version of Colossus nailed that concept when he wanted to retire, but came out to save a sunken submarine stranded on the ocean floor; the scene of one man carrying this sub like a true hero—but, at the same time, knowingly hating that he couldn't walk away—was done really well. Plus, I always loved the 'fastball special'. That being said, if I was him I'd probably crush my wife by accident or something.

SP: You also state that you're a big manga fan.

Russell: Well, I first glimpsed an extract of the manga Akira in a UK publication called Mangazine. It seemed a little weird to me, as it was the first time I had seen anything like it, and it was near the end of the series, so I'd missed everything prior—meaning it really was impossible to understand. Luckily, I saw the film and it totally changed my perception of the series, and of anime/manga itself.

SP: So you had a good reaction to it?

Russell: It blew me away. It was dark, gritty, and at the time, visually stunning. Until I saw Akira, I had only seen things like Spider-Man, X-Men and Batman, so I wasn't used to the 'adult themed cartoons' that anime seemed to be. It changed my idea of where I could go with my art, and set me on the path to altering my artistic style forever.

SP: So you like Cyberpunk, as well, then?

Russell: Well, at the time, I loved it. It was like a fast-paced Blade Runner, and a lot of very cool cyberpunk anime came out to make it look even better (Cyber City 808, Bubblegum Crisis, etc). I'm more of a steampunk fan now; as I've gotten older, I seem to appreciate the more pieced-together and clumsy look of steampunk mechanics. I must associate myself with it.

SP: You were labelled "The Best in Western Talent". How did that make you feel?

Russell: I was quite literally overwhelmed. It's still probably the crowning achievement for me over everything else so far, mainly because the title is so darn cool. To be able to say that I was dubbed one of the best in western talent is a huge pat on the back, and it helped me realise I am on the right path with my comic creations and spurred me on to continue creating. That being said, I still enter as many art competitions as possible to gain more titles and more recognition.

SP: You enter into a lot of competitions. Which ones?

Russell: I see all art contests as free advertising, so almost anything I can find, I'll enter. I won a manga hoshi contest for Letraset, in which I drew a Jason Voorhees pen portrait, and I'm always trying to win again. I've also entered more 'best of western' contests, as my art has improved a lot since my last win. Over the years, I've learnt a lot about using my computer to improve my art, so I'm entering contests that specify computer-based art (for people like ImagineFX Magazine), but that's an incredibly difficult area to crack, as some of the other people learnt to draw on a computer, but I like to stick to pen and paper and just improve my stuff. This means I'm always at a disadvantage, due to being old school. It may take a while, but I think I'll get there eventually... perhaps if I eliminate the competition with poison cupcakes.

One contest I entered was for a contract in Clint Magazine, in which I could have a regularly-published comic series for them, I didn't have anything ready at the time. The closest thing I had was my now self-published book, HMH. As you can tell, I didn't win, but it did motivate me to self-publish instead. I'm glad I did as, so far, the reviews have been really generous and having just a serial comic published in bits may not have had as much of an impact.

SP: You work with PLB. Which story arc?

Russell: I'm working on a series called Children of the Fall. It's about a group of wannabe vigilantes that attempt to follow the path of the PLB character called "The Fall," who is the company's leading gun-toting vigilante. It's written by PLB front man Josh Shockley, and he has actually made me the leader of the wannabe heroes in the comic itself; it's really funny to draw me to a script and think 'that's probably what I'd do'. Josh did an amazing job of summing me up alongside some great background characters. The story is headed toward introducing some recurring villains that I suggested, and I feel really pleased that I was given the chance to create something for PLB and even help shape a part of The Fall's world.

SWARMY BURGER
I'M HUNGRY
SO AM I BABY. HUNGRY FOR SOME LOVIN
NO
HUNGRY FOR A BUGGER
THIS IS NOT A GOOD LOOK FOR CAPTAIN SWARMY
BEHIND THE TIMES
HOW OLD IS YOUR PHONE? MINE CAN PLAY MUSIC, TAKE VIDEO, DANCE THE MACARENA AS WELL AS TEXT MESSAGE!
MY SCREEN IS STILL BLACK AND GREEN. IT MAKES CALLS, SOMETIMES
HELLO? HELLO? DUDE MY DECEPTION IS JUST AWFUL!!!

SP: So you're an artist AND a superhero! How do you find the time?

RUSSELL: WISH I knew, because I'm always complaining about how I don't have enough time, so maybe this is why? It's odd how I've ended up in an actual book as me. I suspect what spurred this on is that I always like to create some fan art for PLB and try to sneak the guys into the work I do, and I guess I'm such an odd character in real life, Josh (who wrote the story) thought I was goofy enough to play the wannabe hero, and so returned the favor. It paid off well, as sometimes I'll tweak certain elements of the script in discussion with Josh. It created something similar to the "Kickass" concept, but more realistic, as I do get my backside handed to me in the book—which is what would happen to any wannabe hero.

SP: What is the source of ideas for the PLB story?

RUSSELL: WELL, THANKS to Josh basing a character on me, my biggest inspiration has become… me. I can't help but include things I probably shouldn't, such as clothes I wear, tattoos I have, and even facial expressions I make. For the next segment, I even wrote a dream sequence—which was based on some of Josh's jokes about me—as well as introducing some of the kind of weirdness I experience in my own dreams. I even end the dream sequence with a quote that often sums up how I feel when I wake up. I'm hoping that it all adds to the fun of the series. I find that with every character I draw, I give them a piece of my own personality, which helps to make them more human. In my own book, HMH, the main two characters are two different sides of my personality and that helps me write so much better.

SP: Sorry, I have to ask. Did you really wrestle on Iron Fist Wrestling?

Russell: Well, I never wrestled for Iron Fist. I actually waved the banner of FCW in the West Midlands, but it was meeting people at FCW that led to me now drawing exclusive artwork for Iron Fist Wrestling. It was pretty odd, actually, as I never realised so many people in the wrestling world were huge comic book fans; training up with these guys was actually like being at an unofficial comic/film convention and I genuinely loved the experience and the laughs. At one point, we all had to shout a Chuck Norris quote before 'diving' off the top rope; that kind of thing really helped relax me, as it was all very nerve-wracking, especially as I was starting at 30, while everyone else had started wrestling in their teens, so I did stick out quite a bit.

SP: Are you still wrestling?

Russell: Sadly not. FCW suffered a tragic blow in the death of a much-loved figure that we all felt, and the training events and shows also took a hit, which resulted in new management of the company. With the time taken out from wrestling, and numerous injuries, I decided to re-focus on my artwork and not go back into wrestling. I do still have the tights, so you never know, ha! I miss the fun I had a lot, and being so physically fit, but I think if I attempted to go back now, I'd probably kill myself somehow.

SP: Did you ever get hurt while wrestling?

Russell: Yeah, a lot. I was very accident-prone, but a fast healer. I broke my finger building the ring, had numerous back injuries, somehow kicked myself in the face, and had someone land off the rope onto my head due to misaiming. And, more drastically, I took a series of other badly-done moves by others that resulted in my neck being permanently 'iffy'. Even now I've not done it for over a year, my neck still cracks when I turn my head. Wrestling does hurt a lot, despite being well-organized.

SP: I guess that affected your drawing.

Russell: Well, when I broke my finger, I simply couldn't draw, but whenever I went to training, it was six hours of straight, non-stop, physical activity, so I could barely move for days. My art took a serious hit while I was trying to wrestle; it's definitely a near-impossible task to balance the two.

SP: You've done artwork for CD covers. Which one was the hardest?

Russell: It was probably the first CD cover I did, for a UK band called Intention. The album was called In the Company of Wolves. As soon as they asked me, I had an image of what I wanted to create, which was Red Riding Hood holding a smoking gun over a dead werewolf; the image was front and back, so on the reverse you could see the back of the characters. It was the first time I made a CD cover, and I never used a computer for my art at this time of my life, so I had to draw the image to scale on the CD cover itself. It was a real pain to cram it all in on such a scale, and I knew it wasn't going well at the time, but the band actually liked the result. It's one of those projects where I look back and cringe a little, because I use the computer for a lot of help on my art now, and I know I could have done such a better job if I made it again. In some ways, I use it as an example to myself to remind me not to be complacent with my art.

SP: Still, the album cover looks good. You're publishing your own comic book now. What made you want to do that?

Russell: I've always wanted to be a comic book artist, but in the UK, it's a very hard field to get into and about thirteen years ago, I pretty much gave up on the idea. But my friend suggested that I should just create some short comic strips to see if they could be published as one-offs, as he thought I had a pretty sinister and crude sense of humour that people would like. I attempted a lot of characters that were mostly rubbish, but one was very well-received, called "Evil Ed and Nasty Ted". I was using a local copy shop to copy my strips, when a guy who worked there asked if he could use them for

his music zine, Inaudible, to which I quickly agreed. That was a big success and, technically, my first publication. People were taking his zine just to read my comic and that really hit home for me, so I knew I was onto a winner. As the years went by, "Evil Ed and Nasty Ted" made it as an online comic via MySpace. Thanks to another indie comic creator (John McDowell creator of "Kozmix"), I was motivated to create my own standalone website and try to make a success of it, but this had very few visitors, due to social network sites taking the limelight. So, with dwindling interest and no publicity to help get things going, my interest also started to shift and the website closed.

A while later, I was waiting for a train when I had a very random joke pop into my head involving a rookie super hero. After that I kept getting more and more ideas based on more heroes, but I was getting such a buzz from them that I simply had to put pen to paper and create the strips. I handed some around to my friends and they loved them, so I kept making more and more, until I had enough to try my first self-published book. That was also well received, so since that first one, I've continued to carry on with more, as I head towards Issue 4, which will be a special tribute issue. I'm seeking lots of different artists to help me create various strips that I will collate into a much longer one-off story. This will be a tribute to my book, in a way, but it's also a tribute to all the people who helped me along the way.

SP: What was the hardest challenge you faced while trying to publish your first comic?

Russell: Sadly, the hardest challenge was the printing company I chose. I just went for the cheapest that was recommend by a friend, but they chose to really mess me around. From the time I finished the book, it took over half a year to get it printed. It was really frustrating for me, as people were continually asking when it was due out and losing interest. I didn't realise that the printer could have such a huge impact on the project, so if anyone wants to print a book, make sure you research the printers as best as possible and keep at them if things aren't heading your way.

SP: Who helps you with the publishing?

Russell: I'm very lucky in the way that the comic book world has provided experienced people with a lot of advice to give. I sent an advertisement as a Christmas gift before the first book was released and Ian Shires read it. His review and advice initiated a revision of the first issue and helped create a much better product.

PLB comics help me a lot with advice on creating the books and getting them through to printing.

I have a friend who is a demon at proofreading (possibly to an excessive level) and, as a thank you, I made him as a villain in my book. You can see him as the main character on the cover to Issue 2.

Of course, I have to thank my wife, who has suffered countless hours of my sitting at a computer, swearing loudly as I try to complete my book.

SP: What is the name of your book?

Russell: My book is called HMH. It used to stand for "Home-Made Heroes," but I found a LOT of other people use the home-made heroes term, so I changed it to just HMH. For me, it now stands for "How I Make Heroes," as the whole book is a series of comedy shorts poking fun at the superhero world, so it really is all about how I see real heroes being (if they were to exist).

SP: Where can people see or purchase a copy of it?

Russell: People can go directly to me for a signed copy or they can find it scattered around in numerous independent comic book retailers. If you don't mind digital though, you can download the PDF of Issues One and Two at the superb price of $0.50 each from Drivethrucomics.com and all their associated sites, such as RPGnow.com. If people e-mail me directly, I can even send a special sample strip, so people can see what it's all about.

SP: Being published is a huge step, and a lot of great artists just never get that far, or run into roadblocks. What advice would you give anyone who is thinking of doing what you have done?

Russell: My advice? Gee, I feel like Gandalf or something now… Do or do not, there is no try. Oh, that's Yoda.

I guess my advice is to keep it short, at first; my book is 20 pages long, but at a reduced price, this means people are more likely to take notice due to the cost. You're quicker at producing books due to the length, and it's easier to amend where the story is going when you get feedback. Also, by reducing the number of pages, it's cheaper to print each unit, which is a huge factor in being self-published.

If anyone wants to test the waters of what they make, then they should try to do a "preview" book, which can be short and sweet, but make it a PDF, so it's there for digital download and you can send it places for reviews and opinions. I did that with my HMH preview and when it was reviewed, I totally revised my first issue as a result.

Most of all, stick at it. I've got some great artistic friends who struggle to self-publish, mainly because they keep changing their minds about what they want to create. Stick to your idea and produce something before moving to the next idea; even if it's just a oneshot, you need to see a finished creation to spur you on. A box full of ideas won't help you feel you've achieved something, but a box of self-made comics just might.

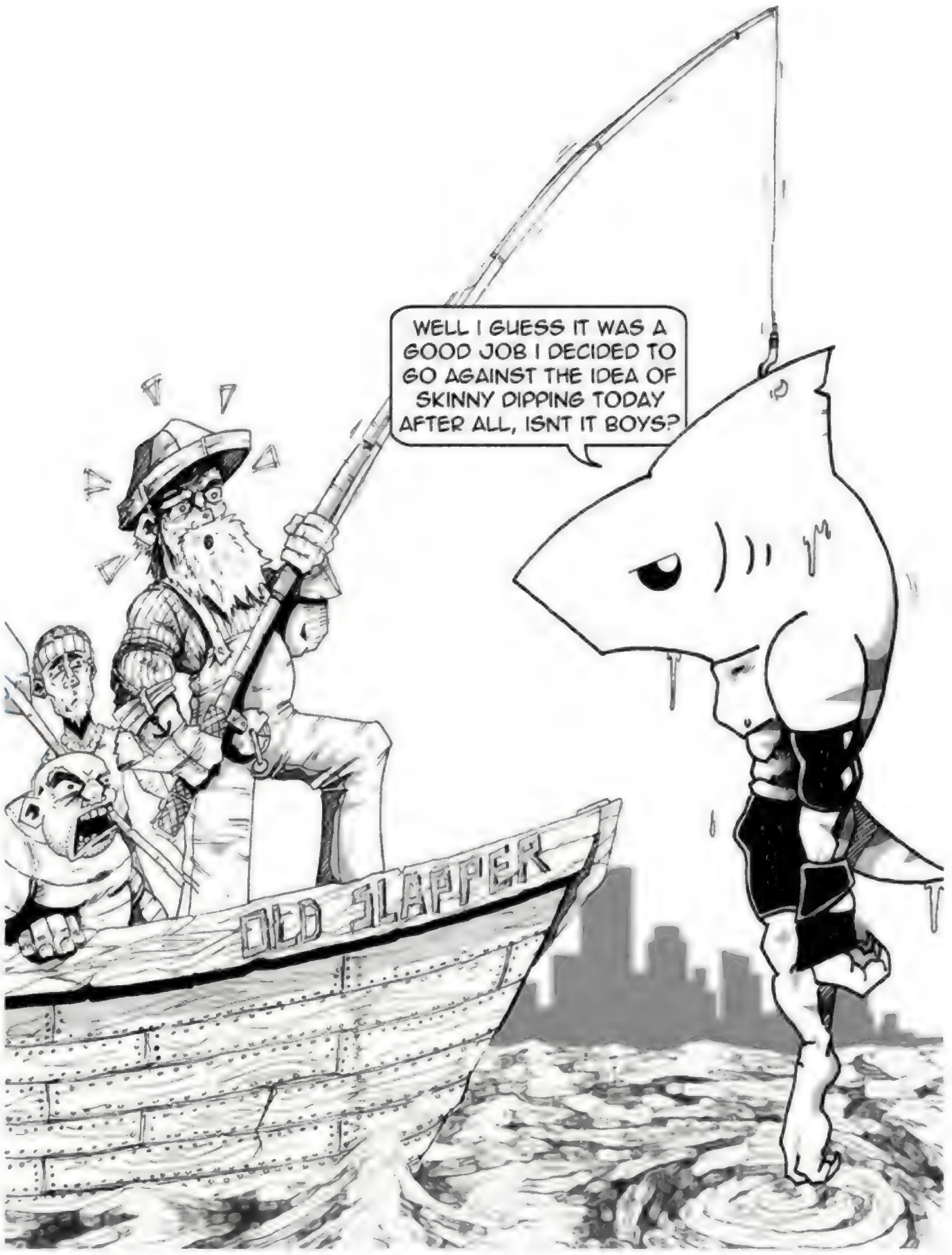
SP: If you could do it all again what would you change and why?

Russell: I would have done it less 'my way,' when creating my comics. My first comic attempt was "Evil Ed and Nasty Ted" (who I've sneaked into HMH Issue 2), but I made my own comic template/pages and it meant they were nearly impossible to print without specially-trimmed pages, which would have cost a fortune. This meant that I couldn't print that comic, but I didn't have the time to publicize it online either, which made it a gradual failure, despite the love it had from the fans. For HMH, I got hold of a printer's comic page template and worked on putting things in that template, so I worked to the rules of the industry.

I often find I'm my own worst enemy in that regard. When I was a kid, I never liked the idea of drawing people as stick figures before filling out the details, so I just made it up as I went, which led to messy but detailed characters. It wasn't until I did use the stick figure approach to get the scale etc. right that my art went up a notch. It's ok to have your own style, but at the end of the day, some things you simply have to obey and stick to.

SP: Okay, last question for you. How does your wife feel about all the work you put into your art?

Russell: Hmmm… that's a tough one. I think that depends on her mood (lol). She is really impressed by some of my creations and loves the end result, but she isn't an arty type, so I can tell she really struggles to get her head around how long things can take. As an example, just this afternoon, I spent three hours making some backgrounds I intend to use for HMH, but it's tough for anyone who wasn't watching to understand why it took three hours just to do that. Some art I've done has taken months on and off, and I have to admit, I spent a lot of time away from my wife and locked in my study. It was annoying for her and I knew it, but at the same time, I wanted to finish my books. So, for my birthday this year, I asked for a laptop. I hate laptops; they irritate me, but at least now, when my wife watches god-awful reality TV shows, I'm sat right beside her, working on the next issue of HMH.



REVELATIONS

The question is not why does MacKenzie do work for the mob.
The question is why is she not a mob lawyer?

The question is not why did demons bio-engineer the Andrahon.
The question is how advanced is demon science?
And how advanced is angel science?

The question is not why does Mac know Zac.
It's why does Arnold know Zac?

And the question is not why does MacKenzie prefer to defend the guilty.
It's what happens to those she defends after she helps free them?

Hereafterpress.ecrater.com/

wix.com/loucien/revelations

POD PRINTING

Last issue, I delved into the state of comics distribution, and found it to be a bit messy and dismal for the small publisher.

Research article by: Ian Shires

I've tested out a few POD printing places as a matter of research, jumping through all the hoops and seeing the results for this issue. I have also been informed of a few more sites to look at over the course of the month, and so I will do so in this article. I am going to stay away from more of the question-and-answer parts that I did last month, and rely more on actual experience and the information provided on the different sites tell us. And so, with that, let's go forward.

I was particularly enamoured with the digital side of Drive-thru Comics, and by how easy it is for a user to set up and start selling PDFs. I was anxious to see how well the printing side of the place worked. And so, I went to set up files their way—and that's when I sat with my jaw slightly open, wondering if what I was gathering from the information was correct. I went to the people I had talked to previously, and it was confirmed. It seems, Drive-Thru is associated with Lightning Source. The cool part of it is that they have locations here and in Europe. The uncool part... is that they require that your books be printed with NO inside covers, AND the very last page of your book be left blank. So, the three best pages, which most publishers use for advertising, have to be blank. I found that shocking. And, I didn't even bother ordering a copy. I can't, in good conscience, advise any publisher to print their books with mandatory blank pages. And so, Drive-Thru maintains its place on my list as the best DIGITAL place to distribute your stuff... but, I'll have to advise you to look elsewhere for your printing.

Last time, you'll remember that I reported that Ka-Blam requires you to print one copy of your book, just to get listed on their Indyplanet Digital side. Well, I did, and I was still waiting on the copy at article-writing time. So, I got that copy and I'm holding it here. I thought I had set it up for saddle stitching, but it came perfect bound, which—in itself—isn't a bad thing, except the

spine is uneven. And by uneven, I mean you set it flat on a table and it has a wave to it; the middle of the book lifts off the table. And, the cover itself won't stay flat. There are visible and tangible bulges and dips in its surface. The color and actual print on the page are OK. No real problems there. You do have to give them the back cover to advertise themselves if you want to get a decent price, a practice I've always had a problem with. If I had ordered multiple copies, hoping to sell them at a show, I would be extremely disappointed and never print with them again. So, I didn't set up #59 to be in their digital download site. Meanwhile, #58 is still not listed at Indyplanet Digital, even though I set it up specifically to be able to do that, and have re-requested it be listed there twice now. So, either they rejected it because it's trying to be set up for free download, or whatever... I don't plan to pursue it much more. I would like to hear from people who have had good experiences with Ka-blam/Indyplanet—is anyone attaining any success there? I'd like to report more on that, so contact me if you would

Embrace your Inner Punster!

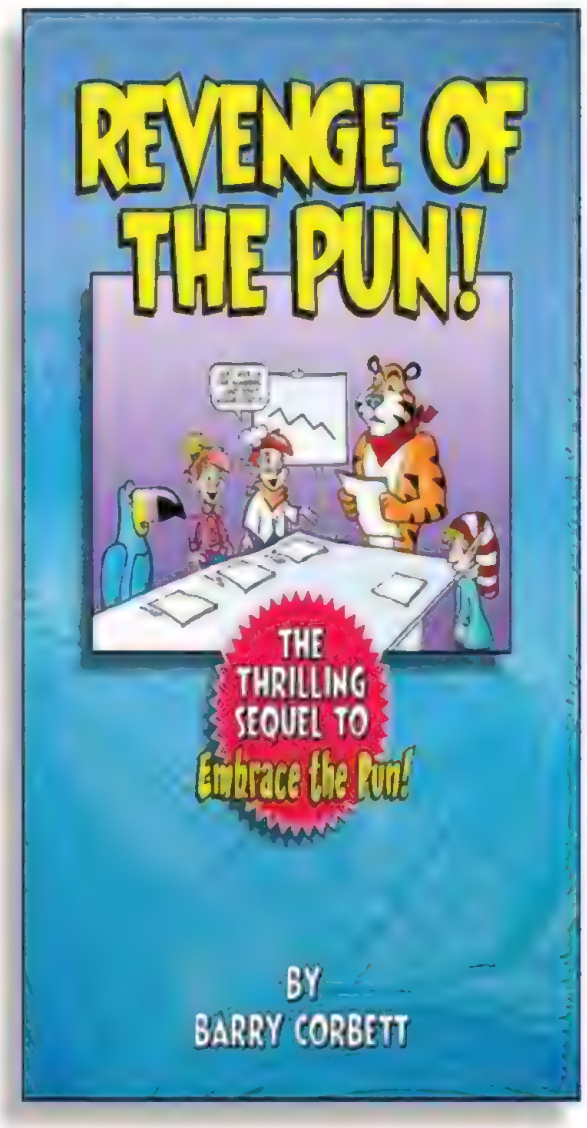
Barry Corbett's 2nd tribute to the "lowest form of humor" features panel cartoons that have appeared in *Reader's Digest, Barrons, First Magazine, American Legion, Christianity Today, Lacrosse Magazine, Medical Economics, Kid Zones, The Artist's Magazine, True West*, and many local newspapers.

Silver Medal – ForeWord Reviews Magazine
2010 Book of the Year Awards

Bronze Medal – Independent Publisher Magazine
2011 IPPY Awards

"A Great Collection—Highly Recommended"
C. F. Hill, Amazon Top 50 Reviewer, November, 2010

100 Pages • Trade paperback and e-book versions available through Lulu.com and Apple at the I-Bookstore.



like to share data; we can do it without naming names, if you like. By the way, the B+W saddle-stitched limited print run we did of #58 came out great—25 copies. I still have a few, which I'll probably take to the next show I do.

Let's look at Comixpress next. I went and set up #59 there, the day after I released the PDF. It was easy to make sure I had the right format and sizes, and was good to go on printing it. Setting it up was a breeze. So, I submitted it and waited. And waited. Finally, on October 19th - about two weeks after submission, I got the invoice to pay for the order so they could print it. Which I have done. So now, I am waiting to get it. I should be able to report on the print quality when I get it... but my advice to anyone going to Comixpress for printing is: don't think you're going to finish a book and have it printed for a show the same month. I don't know how much of this is because I only ordered one copy, and if they take that into account when scheduling printing... As in, had I ordered 300 copies, maybe they'd have done those first, 'cause there's obviously more $$ in it for them to print that many. But, as I am testing POD usability... one-copy orders are what they should be set up to accommodate. If I wanted to make them my POD place to get a copy of SP!, I am not confident fans would regularly come back to order the next issue, if it takes me over a month to be able to provide an URL from which to go order copies. So, so far, I'm not overly impressed with the state of POD for ordering comics.

Now, there are a bunch of places to PRINT your comic, and that's not really my focus for this month. I used to spend a lot of time promoting the idea of publishers doing short-run printing, as opposed to POD and, having dug into the "big two" of POD, I have to say that opinion has been strengthened. There are places like http://www.comicbookprinting.com, that people have told me about. Their front page says, "We want to help you be seen and get noticed," but they don't POD at all; nowhere is there a link to where people can order copies. It's just a printer. So, that's fine; people that have used them have had good enough experience with them to tell others about them, so they are doing the printing part right, at least.

360 Digital Books (http://360digitalbooks.com), however, is a printing place that now also offers order fulfillment. I'm just digging into their setup, but it sure sounds good. They will set up your book, print X number that you decide, ship copies where you need them, and then WAREHOUSE the rest for you—for free. They will provide you with a way to order those copies individually, so you can set it up on your website that, when someone orders a copy, the order gets fulfilled automatically with 360 Digital. I'm not COMPLETELY sure how the $$ is run, because it appears you can use your own Paypal or other merchant processing. I might go ahead and set up a book there, just to see how it goes—if I can't get a full report on it from someone already using it. They do not appear to have their own shopping cart, so you are completely on your own, as far as getting people to order the copies—but they will inform you when you are running low on a printing and check if you want more printed, etc. It's a pretty decent way to get the benefits of short-run printing and act like POD... 'cause the cost of shipping extra copies to YOU and then shipping them out to individual orderers eats profits. If you can keep the extra copies there, and only have to ship them once, that's a good thing. It is something that definitely works for me as a model.

And I've mentioned that to my buddy Jay Savage, who also runs a printing company where we're going to work on making SP! available in a manner like I'm describing above. At the time that I write this, I am not sure how far Jay is interested in taking that, or if it's something he'd even find interesting in building on a larger scale. So, we'll see. I can attest that for quality printing at better

JOIN BONNIE AS SHE LIVES OUT HER DREAMS WITH THE LOVEABLE BIG BROWN BEAR...
I WANT A BEAR FOR CHRISTMAS
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY STEVE COFFIN
COMING 2012

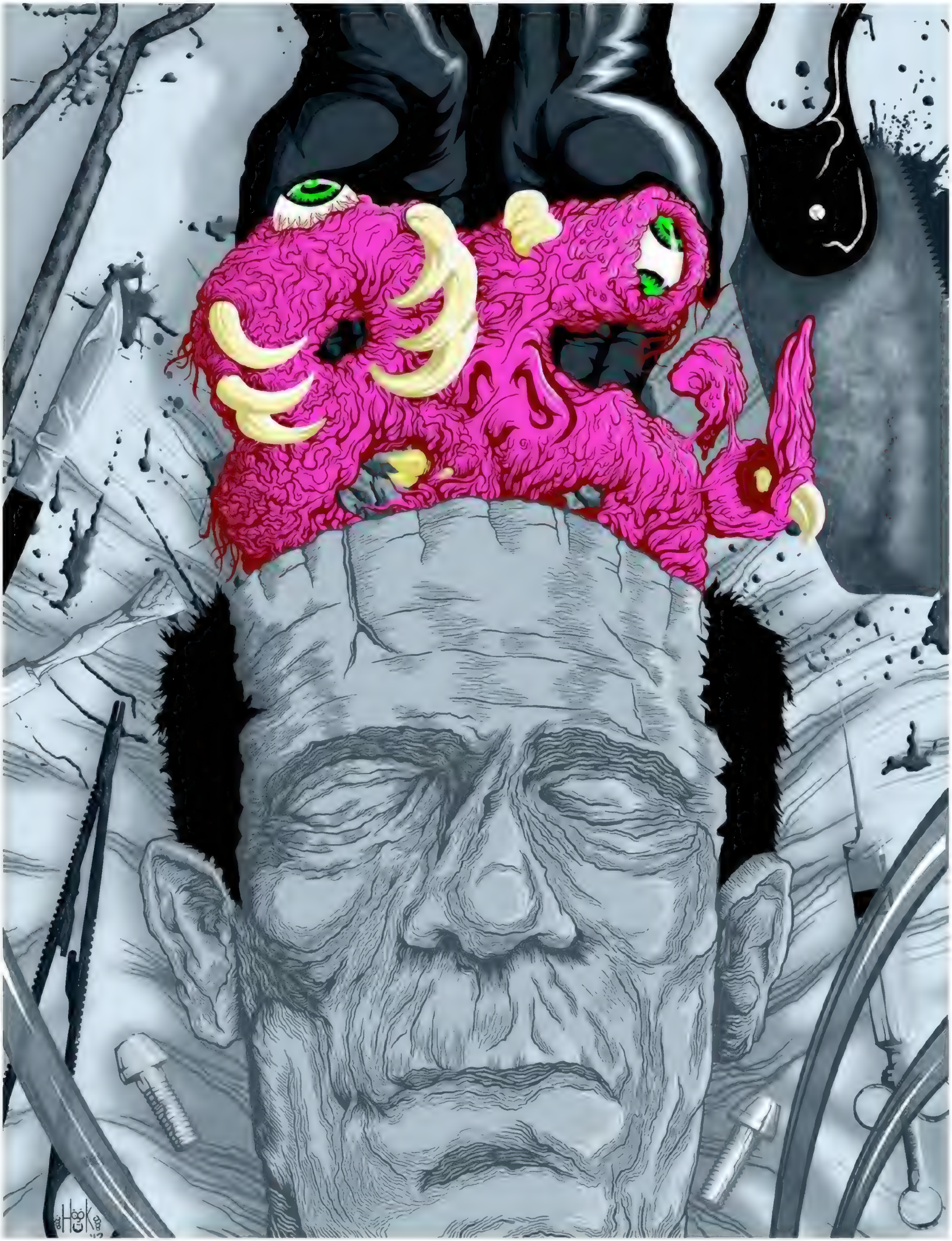
Jay's positioned himself expertly to help publishers' bottom lines.

Delving into the other things that have made it to my desk, I went to set up SP! #59 at https://www.balloond.com, which is another download site. They do things a bit differently, requiring that you upload your pages as images. I have not yet taken the time to extract the pages of an issue as images, and then upload them, because the magazine is set up differently and didn't start out as images before the PDF, and they don't upload PDFs. In future updates to this series, I will dig deeper to see how they fare on digital delivery.

A newer printer/distro setup that was brought to my attention, http://www.liberdistro.com shows decent promise. You have to submit your book for review/approval, so I'll do that with this issue of SP! and see how that goes. The prices for printing look pretty well in-line with what we see at other POD places. They actually have a MAXIMUM print run of 500 stated; if you need more than that, you need to ask them about it. Their FAQ page... has no questions and answers on it yet. So, I get the impression that this place is just getting going, with seventeen publishers listed.

That's going to do it for this month, my friends. I will continue to keep my eyes and ears peeled for more information about what is going on out there, what's working, and what isn't, and I will continue to personally test out bits and pieces and report on them as I am able. I've given up doing layouts for the magazine, which is going to give me at least a full WEEK more time to work on such things. If you would like to provide any information or input along these lines, please feel free.

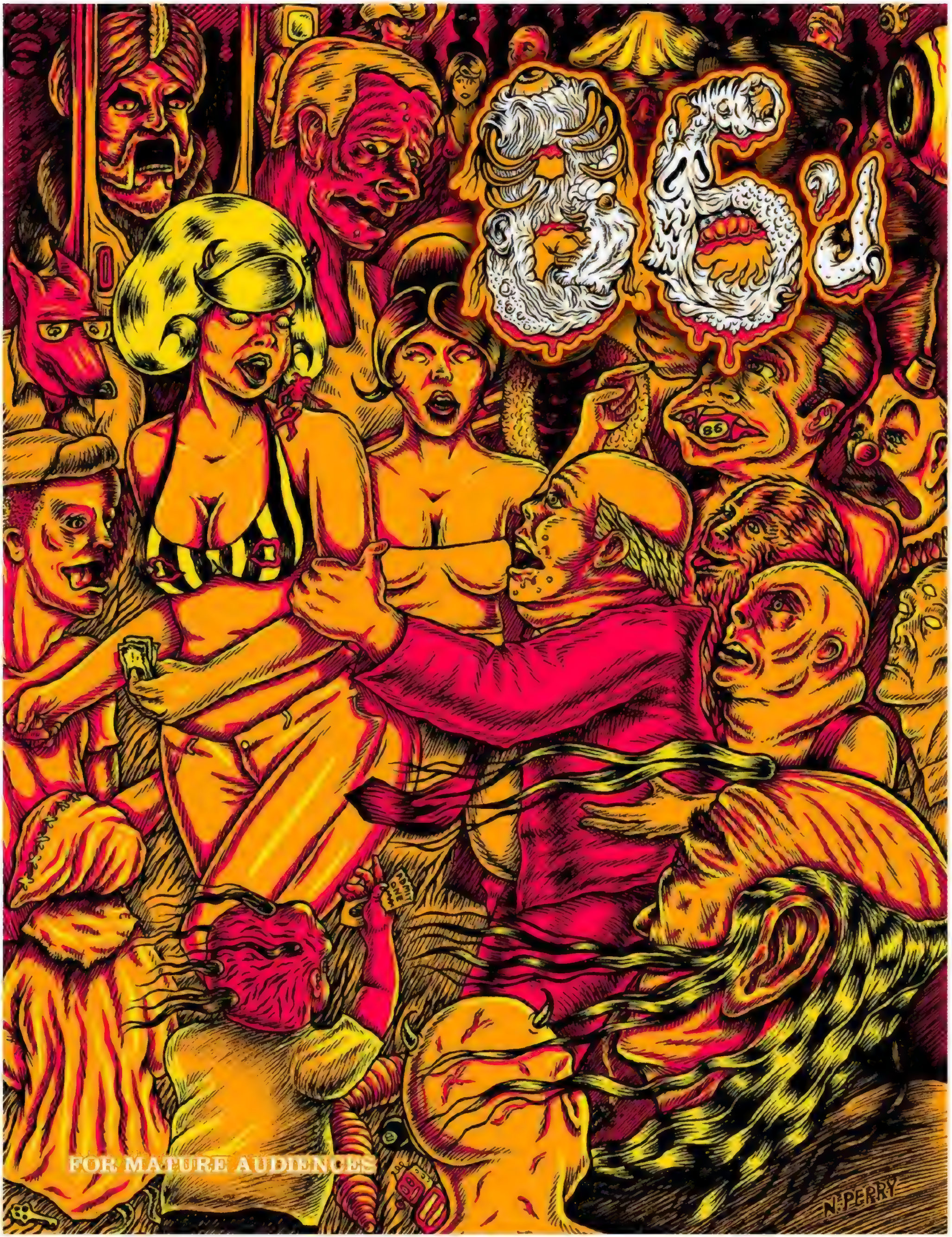
Send me e-mails! Ian@dimestoreproductions.com



I WAKE UP, FULL OF PANIC.
GASP!
FOLLOWED BY A BRIEF MOMENT OF CONFUSION.
HEY, YOU WAKE YOURSELF UP? I HEARD YOU START TO SNORE.
WHAT? NO...I...
WHATEVER. YOU KNOW YOU DID.
BUT THEN THE CONFUSION FADES...
YOU'RE NOT GETTING OUT OF WATCHING THIS MOVIE WITH ME TONIGHT.
EAT PRAY LOVE
YEAH, YEAH.
...AND THE HORROR SETS IN.
BUT SINCE IT'S ALMOST OVER I'LL LET YOU FINISH YOUR GAME FIRST.
SOME CAFFEINE WILL KEEP YOU AWAKE. I'LL GRAB YOU A SODA.
FULL CIRCLE
STORY BY JEFF JOHNSON & BRIAN PATTERSON
WRITTEN BY JEFF JOHNSON
ART BY GREG SMALLWOOD

WITH THE PACKERS INSIDE FIELD GOAL RANGE AND ONLY TWO MINUTES LEFT ON THE CLOCK, WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK AFTER THIS
TONIGHT AFTER THE GAME, PAUL TELLIS US WHEN THIS RAIN WILL END IN THE FIVE-DAY FORECAST.
POLICE LI
PLUS, MORE HORRIFYING DETAILS EMERGE FROM A SERIES OF BRUTAL MURDERS COMMITTED BY A MAN IN A HALLOWEEN MASK. STAY TUNED AFTER THE GAME.
KRAKOW!
WHAT HAPPENED?
LOOKS LIKE THE POWER'S OUT, BABE.
HANG ON A SEC. I'VE GOT A LIGHTER LYING AROUND HERE SOME-WHERE...
FOUND IT!
KRAKOW!
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE WE'LL BE WATCHING THAT MOVIE NOW.
MMM... SO WHAT ELSE DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?

86'd


FOR MATURE AUDIENCES
N. PERRY

YES, FELLAS. I'M THE REAL DEAL. AIN'T NONE-O-THEM FLOOZIES ARE GONNA GIVE YA WHAT I'M GONNA. ALL YA NEED IS A KEY TO SEE WHAT I'M MADE OF.
I-UH, I CAN GIVE YA A SHOW AND...
UH, KEYGIRL, I GOT THE MONEY, HONEY, IF YOU GOT THE TIME. YOU ARE THE GIRL FOR ME. HOW DO I GET MY MITS ON ONE OF THOSE KEYS?
HOW MUCH? REALLY! I THINK I LOVE YOU!
OK, BUDDY. $200 WILL TURN THE TRICK. BRING THE BREAD AND FOLLOW ME.

86'd

1 DEPARTURE
I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL FOR ATTENDING THIS MONUMENTAL OCCASION.
THE MISSION OF THE ORCA IV IS TO BE THE LONGEST AND MOST EXTENSIVE MANNED EXPLORATION OF SPACE TO DATE. THERE IS NO DESTINATION THE JOURNEY IS THE GOAL.
THE PURPOSE OF THIS CONTROVERSIAL MISSION IS TO SEARCH FOR ANY EVIDENCE OF LIFE AND RELAY IT BACK TO EARTH. THERE IS A TRAGIC IRONY TO THIS; ALL ABOARD THE O.4. WILL BE SACRIFICING THEIR OWN LIVES TO DO SO.
I AND THE CREW I LEAD WILL NEVER SEE ANY ONE WE KNOW AGAIN.

I Hate Zero-G, First Book of the Rowlinson Inc Series

Now available through Createspace and Smashwords

This is not redemption. This is Revelations.

http://www.facebook.com/hereafte.press.revelationsr
http://www.wix.com/loucien/revelations

http://hereafterpress.ecrater.com/

PAY THE MAN

TAX TIME COMETH... ARE YOU PREPARED?

by Jennifer "Scraps" Walker

Seeing as we've only got two months left in the year, many of us are currently caught up in the race to the finish line that is the December holidays. But let's take a moment to think beyond December 31st, and on to what January will bring: a new year, yes, and the annual reckoning called taxes.

If the word "taxes" sends a shiver down your spine and you dread the coming of April 15th, these tips can help you get organized before the end of the year—and maybe help you to avoid some of the April Anxiety you've experienced in the past.

One of the common headaches of taxes is finding all your receipts and notes and sales slips. Now is an excellent time to begin corralling them into one location. The infamous shoe box and some envelopes can do in a pinch, but I prefer a multi-pocket expanding file folder for maximum ease of sorting. Keep each type of expense (both personal and professional) in its own pocket, so you can put your hands on exactly what you're looking for when it comes time to fill out your forms.

Here's a handy list of the pieces of paper you'll be glad you've found when it comes time to sit down with your tax professional.

- Inventory: beginning of the year numbers, end of the year numbers to date, and the sales to match the difference (don't forget any trades you might have made at conventions or shows).

- Receipts for printing your books, prints, magazines, etc.

- Sales taxes paid, business license fees (if applicable in your area)

- Invoices or contracts for any freelance work you've done this year

- Shipping receipts for orders filled during the year, along with any supply purchases

- Travel receipts (hotels, convention fees, airfare, mileage reports, gas, meals)

- Advertising costs--both print and online--and any "office" supply-type items (business cards, return address stamps, mailing labels, etc.)

- Domain registration/renewals—if any, and hosting bills for your professional websites

- Medical receipts

- Any equipment purchased this year for professional pursuits (computers, software, printers, etc.)

After I've tracked everything down, I like to list each purchase and sale in a spreadsheet, but that's me. Do whatever works for you.

These are the basics for any business, regardless of your filing status. If you've incorporated your self-publishing business, all of this should be easy to find, because it will all be under your business name. A lot of us however, myself included, keep things small and simple and operate either as sole proprietors or as an LLC, which means our business and personal affairs are likely intertwined. While it's always best to keep these things separate, when you're just starting out, it can be tough—which is why keeping good records is essential.

And speaking of business versus personal, if you're new to business in general, you may not know that the government requires a business to make a profit three out of five years; otherwise you drop down to hobbyist status and you lose all the benefits of filing a Schedule C.

If you also have a day-job (as many of us do), now is an excellent time to check on the more mundane side of taxes. Use last year's tax tables (available via irs.gov) and your most recent pay stub to make sure your employer is withholding enough taxes so you don't end up owing on that side of things. If you think you might be close, especially once your business profits are factored in, consider adjusting your exemptions with your employer or even asking that an additional dollar amount be withheld from your regular pay to help offset any shortfall you foresee.

Did you move this year? Now is a great time to make sure any people you've worked with have your correct address. While much is being done online, these days, tax forms (like those all-important 1099 forms) are still required to be mailed, and a delay in receiving your forms—or worse, returned mail—means a delay in wrapping up your taxes. It's a good idea to keep a completed W-9 form on your computer (or on a cloud server, if you're frequently working away from home), so that you can send off all the necessary information for a new client upon request.

And if, by some stroke of luck or genius, you've had an exceptionally good year, perhaps it's time to invest in new equipment and upgrades, or place orders for your convention supplies to offset your profits. Charitable donations are another way to offset an abundance of good fortune. Or maybe it's time to look into opening (or maxing out) your retirement investments before the end of the year. After all, a good year this year doesn't guarantee one the next!

Finally, November is an excellent time to find a tax professional you can trust. Everyone worth having is going to be swamped come January 2nd, so asking around now gives you time to have a consultation, check some references, and shop around without the pressure of a deadline. If you can find an accountant that specializes in creative entrepreneurs and small businesses, even better. And while, I know, the fees may seem like a lot, keep in mind that those fees are legitimate business expenses and have their own line on Schedule C.

The important thing is to just get started. Maybe this is the first year you're claiming business income or maybe it's the year you decide to do it yourself, instead of paying someone else to do it for you. Getting a head start is never a bad idea.

Jennifer "Scraps" Walker is the author and illustrator of What to Feed Your Raiding Party, the comic book cookbook for gamers. When she's not writing, drawing, or creating something somewhere, she works as the bookkeeper for a commercial print shop.

READERS

By Jennifer "Scraps" Walker

Mark F. Davis

Hi Ian,

I really love the issue, including the printing. I'm very grateful you featured Surprising. I was greatly disappointed the cover artist, who is a good friend of mine, wasn't credited.

-Mark F. Davis, http://www.surprising-comics.com/

Mark is referring to the limited edition printing of 25 copies we did of #58. I'm not sure exactly how it happened, because the name is on the PDF and the test POD printed copy I did through Ka-Blam, but Ken Johnson definitely deserves my apology, and I hope he will accept it. We try our best to make the best publication we can here, but no one can be faulted for that omission but me. Everyone head over to Mark's website and get an extra copy of something Ken drew, ok?

Now, some comments...

Rob Veith

I want to tell you that I believe in this magazine. A few random thoughts which might help you take it to the next level:

- Self Publishing is not just for comics. I know you know that. Targeting readers who are producing novels and audio recordings—those sorts of things—might increase readership. It takes a lot more time to review a novel, so that would have to be a back burner idea for now, I think. But with NaNoWriMo coming up in a few weeks, promoting Self Publisher! to aspiring self-publishing novelists would increase the readership dramatically.

- I never thought I'd say this to any independent press book, but I wonder if you're publishing too frequently. Personally, I'm about two or three issues (I'm not exactly sure) behind. If I start to get too far behind in a periodical, I'm tempted to just give it up, eh? Am wondering if a "meaty" bimonthly might be more effective than the current monthly.

- I think the art direction of the book could be finetuned to make it more compelling for a casual reader. Ultimately, you want an audience that isn't made up completely of self-publishing creators, but also of people interested in reading the TRUE alternative press. People who are used to reading indie publications arguably have a higher tolerance for indie graphic design. That said, I can imagine an SP! Magazine which is laid out with more of the iPad/Kindle readers in mind. One of these days, once I get ahead on my own deadlines, I'd like to send you a potential layout for SP which I think you'd like.

I'm a really bad self-publisher. I spend all of my time working on my various projects and never have any energy left to promote them. I haven't even sent you a free ad submission. I'm setting myself a deadline of the end of this year to finish up a bunch of things; then I'll spend some time promoting them. Otherwise, I just keep creating.

Anyway, keep up the good work.

Rob Veith - eorthman@gmail.com

Rob, thank you for taking the time to write! I'll just mention a couple points from that: SP! has in the past covered more areas of Self Publishing. Right now, we don't have staff enough to do more, but we would definitely like to. I don't think a decreased frequency is the answer, though we are going to eliminate one issue out of the next three months to give everyone more breathing room for the Holiday season. I think issue sizes will have to develop along a "split off" mentality... like having the Sneak Peeks become one book, the Interviews another, the reviews another.. .which would also let us do a focus on music, etc, in such a way that people who are interested can get to it without our tossing a 200-page PDF

LETTERS

at them every month. With so much constantly going on out there, our being adaptive to the needs of our reader base is what will evolve us into an indispensible website/magazine system. Oh, and Jay Savage just took over art direction/layouts from me, so, we can all be really happy about that! —Ian

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Ed McKeogh

While I haven't been doing as much as I'd like on the creator side of things, I've been following some threads of information that seem to indicate that book/comic/newspaper publishing is at the cusp of a long-overdue change. But it's a drastic change that hasn't taken a definitive shape yet. One clear indicator of things to come is the number of long-time "exclusive" mainstream comic book creators (and big-name novelists) who aren't renewing their contracts, opting instead to create and control their intellectual property (IP) instead of giving it to a corporation for a pittance.

Nobody's hit the big-time in the comic book market yet, but when they do, watch to see how many people follow their business model.

So, now that I'm thinking about it, maybe calling the magazine "Self Publisher!" implies looking backwards, at a niche in the history of comic book publishing. Nowadays, it's all about the IP—creating it, controlling it, disseminating it to the largest possible audience, and finding a way to profit from it—instead of getting a comic onto the newsstand, into a spinner rack, or on the local comic book store's shelf.

It isn't just about making comics anymore; it's about finding ways to turn your IP into a robust revenue stream, instead of a floppy comic with a 30-day shelf-life. I was in SPI only five years ago, and look how much the industry—and technology—has changed in such a short period.

Cheaper on-demand printing. Comics online from just about every venue possible. The loss of an entire chain of bookstores. An implosion in the number of comic book stores across the country. Creators circumventing conventional gatekeepers, getting their work into the hands of an appreciative audience, and making contacts, connections, and (sometimes) enough money to live on. And we haven't even hit bottom, yet (which, as scary as it seems, might just be a very good thing).

Anyway ... I'm looking at the "SP!" logo and thinking how easy it could become "IP!" A place where people can share information on how to manage their IP, with physical comics as only one element in a broader approach to enhancing revenue.

Just thoughts off the top of my head. Probably more than you wanted to hear. But at least you know somebody's paying attention. Again, good luck.

Ed McKeogh - ed.mckeogh@comcast.net

Well absolutely thanks for a very interesting letter. I understand where you're coming from on this, but I do want to make one distinction: even when it comes to movies and music, the PUBLISHING RIGHTS are where the $$ is. That's what you get paid for. If a company wants your North American First Printing Rights, you should be able to sell them that, and then "all rights reserved" refers to not being allowed to print it again without permission/additional revenue to you. You have to read your contracts with ANY publisher to see what you are giving them. Many publishers don't really bother to learn these distinctions or include them; others omit it on purpose, so they can do whatever they want in reprinting it. So I think our continuing to re-focus people on that as a term might actually be a good track. Intellectual Property is an outshoot of people retaining ownership of the rights to their published material. Perhaps we should do some articles focusing on terminology. Anyone out there want to follow up on this? —Ian

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Well that's going to do it for the letters this issue, folks. If you want to voice your opinion on anything, please write to: Letters@dimestoreproductions.com

LAST WORDS

Jay Savage has worked in and around the comic book, film and video game industry as an artist for over 20 years. Jay is currently acting Publisher at Blackline Comics.

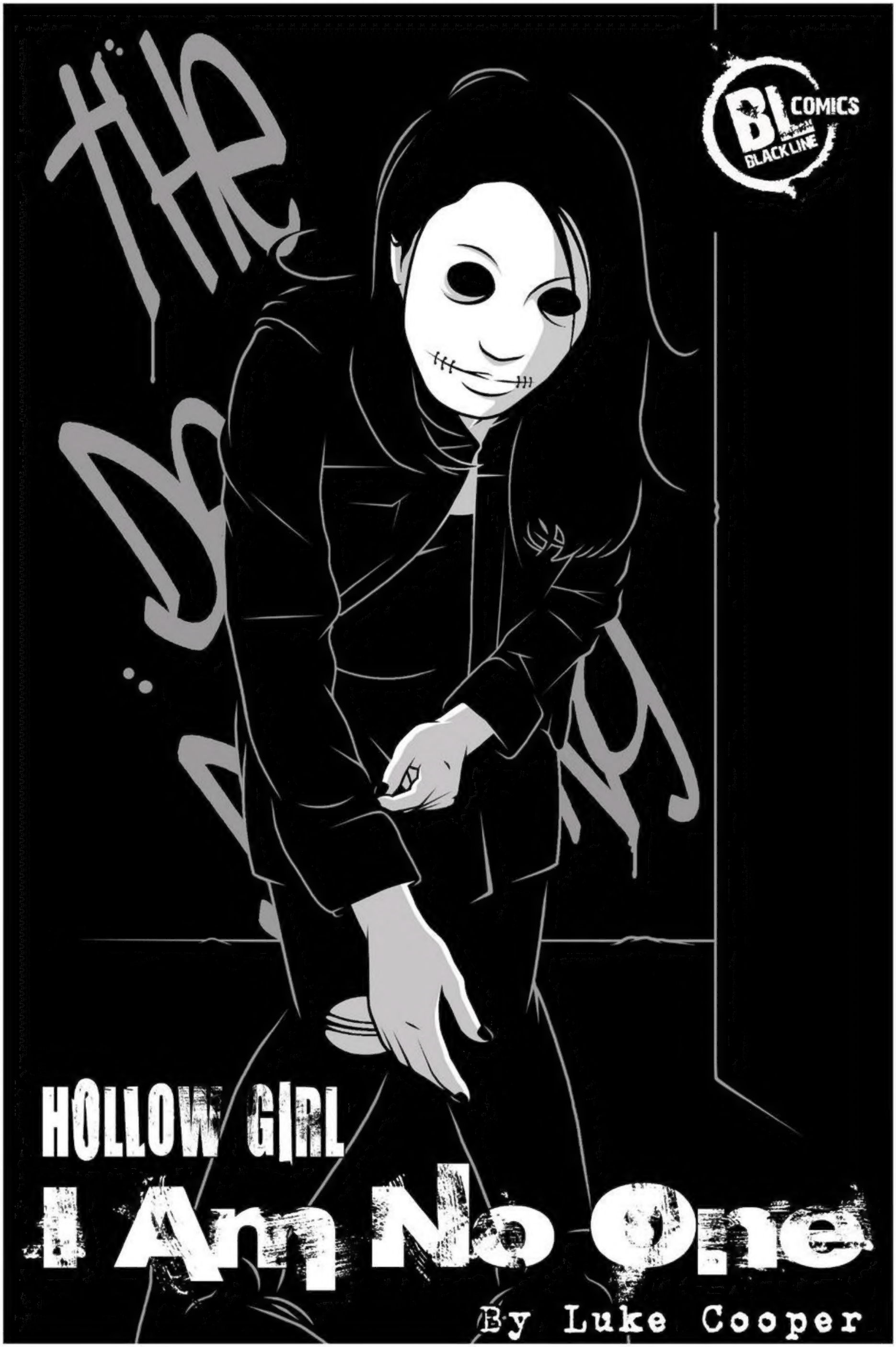
HELLO FELLOW CREATORS of alternate realities, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for both contributing and reading Self Publisher Magazine. As you may have noticed this issue has been a while coming and it is my hope that you enjoy the new format featured here in issue #60. Ian Shires has been gracious enough to have me come aboard as Creative Director for the foreseeable future. You have no doubt noticed by now that there are is a major change in format with this issue #60, both in page dimension and layout. It is my goal to continue to fine-tune this new format and the overall appearance of future issues of SP Magazine. With that said I please allow me to formally apologize for a few things regarding issue #60. ALTHOUGH IT WAS my goal to move the look of the magazine forward, I was not at all prepared for the amount of work involved with retooling the layout of the Magazine. It is still not perfect however I hope you will agree that it is moving in the right direction. Every venture experiences growing pains and SP Magazine is no exception. With growth comes inevitable change and I am ever thankful for your patience in allowing us to provide as professional a product and venue for you as possible.

ONE AREA OF major concern with this issue was the wide variety of file types, resolutions and dimensions that I had to work with on this issue. Because of this you have no doubt noticed that some images are much more crisp and readable than others. Trust me when I say that I manipulated images to the best of my ability to make sure everything was presented as well as possible. We learned a few lessons with this issue and one of these is that we need to create content submission guidelines and I am in the process of doing this so that every image is crisp and as the creator intended it to be.

THERE ARE GOING to be a lot of new aspects coming to the magazine in the issues ahead and I hope you the reader and Ian Shires will continue to provide me the opportunity to make Self Publisher Magazine the absolute best Independent Comics magazine available.

Thank you again,

Jay Savage


BL COMICS
BLACK LINE
HOLLOW GIRL
I Am No One
By Luke Cooper

GERMZ